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MARCH 1951

VOL. 17, No. 7

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Further Nominations For The Record Hall of Fame

Last month, in making up our list of records for the year 1950 which in our estimation deserved inclusion in the Record Hall of Fame—imaginary or otherwise, we omitted several important Bach recordings. It is not a secondary thought that prompts us to elect five of the Prades Festival records, or the Viennese performance of Bach's *B minor Mass*, but the fact that they escaped the discerning eye of the staff as the records were late in reaching us. While some performances in the selected Prades Festival discs are not up to others, they too will be enjoyed for the affectionate music-making of the performing artists.

Here, then, are the omissions that belong in our nominations for the Record Hall of Fame, published in our February issue.

BACH: *Cello Sonatas in G major and D major*; Casals and Baumgartner. Columbia LP disc ML-4349. (Review page 159, January).

BACH: *Cello Sonata in G minor*. Casals and Baumgartner. Columbia LP disc ML-4350.

BACH: *Concerto for Violin and Oboe in C minor*; Stern, Tabuteau, Prades Festival Orchestra, and *Concerto for Two Violins in D minor*; Stern, Schneider, and Orch. Columbia LP disc ML-4351.

BACH: *Concerto in A minor* (piano, violin, flute) Horszowski, Schneider, Wummer, and Orch., and *Concerto for Violin in D minor*; Szigeti, Casals and Orch. Columbia LP disc ML-4352.

BACH: *Concerto for Violin in A minor*; Stern, Casals and Orch., *Concerto for Clavier in F minor*; Clara Haskil, Casals and Orch., and *Trio Sonata for Violin, Flute and Piano in G major*; Stern, Wummer and Istomin. Columbia LP disc ML-4353.

BACH: *Mass in B minor*; Vienna Akademie Kammerchor, Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Soloists, Organ, directed by Hermann Scherchen. Westminster LP set, discs 50-37/39. (Review page 211, February).

Mozart and Opera Prevail

▲LOOKING BACK over the past year, we find that the composer of the year — Johann Sebastian Bach, by virtue of the 200th anniversary of his death — did not get the big break in the number of his works recorded. Mozart outdistanced all others in this respect, with Bach running a close second, and with Haydn and Beethoven tying in third place. Verdi came in fourth but, as this is the year honoring the 50th anniversary of his death, he may well move ahead in the next nine months.

Mozart has been steadily advancing on records in the last five years which suggests that the record buying public have at long last awakened to a latent appreciation of his unrivaled genius.

There has never been in the history of recording as many complete, or near complete, operas issued in any one year. The rumor that most, if not all of Verdi's operas, will be sponsored by Cetra-Soria should be of interest to operatic enthusiasts.

The interest in opera from the phonograph has undoubtedly been stimulated in recent years by the Saturday afternoon broadcasts from the Metropolitan Opera House. Yet, opera is neither ideally nor always completely satisfying from either radio or records. Opera is one musical medium that television could serve to advantage, but the necessary backing has not yet materialized. This seems strange considering that television has taken hold so strongly in the past two years. Many people this past year, who have been regular listeners to the Saturday radio broadcasts, have told us that they were more stimulated by the televised performance of the Met's opening night *Don Carlos* than they ever were by a radio presentation of an opera. Though television was unable with its present powers to provide the full glamour of scenic and costume coloring, it offered a more realistic approach than radio ever has been able to accomplish. We know of more listeners to broadcast opera, who had made no effort to attend a live performance, who bought their

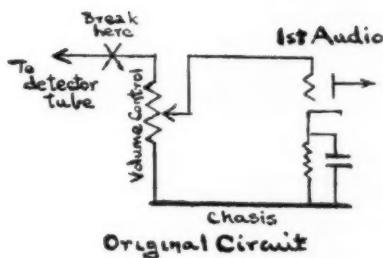
first tickets for the Metropolitan this past season. Almost weekly, we were beset with inquiries on how friendly readers and acquaintances could obtain desirable seats to see the "great Golden Curtain" rise and to hear live opera.

There is reason to believe that in a wide survey of record enthusiasts the operatic fan would occupy a conspicuous place. For the phonograph ever since its beginning has favored operatic artists. But the curious thing about this new interest in opera is that it is not the collectors of old opera who are endorsing modern operatic records, but an entirely new crowd which undeniably owes its interest to radio. The collector of older records is more interested in personalities and arias detached from the opera; most of those with which we have come in contact either do not know or refuse to evidence any interest in the relationship of the aria to the context of a music drama. It is pitiful to hear some of these people between the acts at a Metropolitan Opera performance arguing about the merits of the singing. It is not judged on an over-all basis, but on the singing of individual arias, and one often hears two or more of a kind protesting that the stars of the evening did not sing this or that aria in a comparable manner to some artist dead and gone, whose records they own and by which they are unfortunately dominated. In like manner, in record stores, these same people find fault with complete opera recordings. It is amazing how many record enthusiasts of this kind there are who have never been able to concentrate on a full opera much less a symphony, concerto, or chamber work. And yet, they regard themselves as true music lovers — though in our language they are actually no more than musical dabblers or samplers.

Verdi and Mozart

The idea of all of Verdi's operas on records, even if they are not the greatest performances ever devised, gladdens the hearts of many we know. But, inasmuch as Mozart is capturing the record buyer's fancy, to say nothing of their money, why not all of Mozart's operas on records — at least, all his great operas? One wishes that Toscanini would direct a Mozart opera for recording, and Sir Thomas — who gave that wonderful performance of *The Magic Flute* (which is long overdue on LP) — would turn his attentions to *Figaro*

(Continued on page 226)



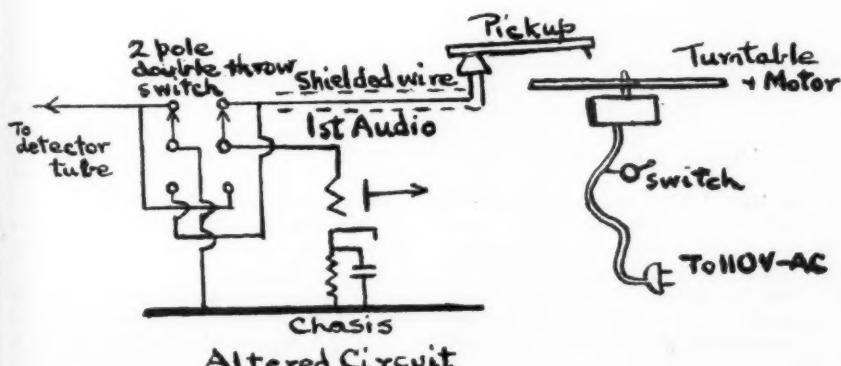
CONVERTING YOUR EQUIPMENT TO LP REPRODUCTION

By George F. Varkonyi

SINCE THE ADVENT of LP recordings, listeners have had the problem of adapting existing equipment to this new media. The equipment may range from small table radios or combinations to elaborate custom-built systems. Many of these outfits lend themselves to conversion easily. Though much has been written on this subject, too few articles have been devised to serve the non-technical listener. Therefore in this article the writer will endeavor to give definite advice about specific units and their installation.

Before proceeding, there are two facts that must be borne in mind. First, the addition

of LP equipment in most cases will take more space; and second, the quality of your present equipment must be taken into consideration before choosing the components for the conversion. For, it is as incongruous to add a \$150 turntable and pickup combination to a \$25 radio as it would be to add a cheap turntable to a \$1000 custom installation. In fact, aside from economic considerations, very often the addition of high quality components will make a poor set sound worse. Therefore, the equipment to be adapted to conversion must be evaluated along the following lines.



I. Small table model radio.

- (a) With 78 rpm record playback.
- (b) Without any provisions for record playback.

II. High quality table model radio (most table model FM sets fall into this category).

- (a) With 78 rpm record changer.
- (b) With 78 rpm playback equipment.
- (c) Without any playback provision.

III. High quality console radio.

- (a) With 78 rpm record changer.
- (b) With 78 rpm playback equipment.
- (c) Without any playback provision.

IV. Medium priced amplifier and speaker system.

V. High quality custom-built equipment.

I.

The conversion of the small table model set is the simplest problem. No special controls for bass turnover or treble rolloff are recommended, as the limited audio frequency range of the receiver makes them practically useless. In fact, we do not consider the reproduction of LP records on such equipment as this advisable, except where it is a temporary expedient or is equipment for a child's room.

(a) Where there is already 78 rpm playback equipment, it will be necessary to discard the old motor and replace it with one of the newer models. This is preferable to adding a separate player unit. The 3-way operation or speed is most desirable as there is only a slight difference in price between cheap single speed or 3-way turntables. The General Industries motor and turntable model TS, for 3-way operation, and the Astatic 6D crystal turnover pickup will suffice in this case. These units are connected to the original wires on the old motor and pickup. The conversion will then be complete.

(b) Where no provisions are made for phonograph reproduction, it is necessary to break into the audio circuit of the radio. A two pole double throw toggle switch and shielded wire are all that is required. The electrical change necessary is shown in the diagrams. (This job can be done by a competent radio service man for a relatively small ser-

vice charge, possibly as low as \$5.00. In this case when buying the motor and pickup it must be borne in mind that housed units for LP playback can be used. If desired the recommended units in (a) can be incorporated, provided the listener can improvise a box of his own.

II.

The conversion of the high quality table model radio is a more involved problem as there is a great variation in the electrical design of these receivers. The audio frequency range of some of these sets is quite extended, making controlled bass turnovers and treble rolloffs very desirable. In this class receiver we recommend the crystal pickup, the Astatic E4P equalizer as a good inexpensive unit for accomplishing this. It is connected across the two wires from the pickup (caution — not the motor leads). In sets that have tone controls, additional variation of bass and treble is possible and should be used to suit the taste of the listener.

(a) Where the original equipment has a 78 rpm record changer, discard this unit and replace either with the Garrard RC 80 changer, with the Astatic turnover dual crystal cartridge, or with the Webster 106-1 (latest model) changer with crystal cartridge. (While the Garrard is recommended first, it should be pointed out that this unit has no provision for manual operation.) The motor and pickup leads are connected to the same leads of the discarded changer.

(b) Where standard playback equipment (no record changer) has to be converted, the General Industries motor TS and Astatic 6D crystal turnover pickup — suggested in section 1 — may be used. Should a record changer be desired it is doubtful that it could be housed in the cabinet of the set. Therefore, the Garrard RC 80C with crystal pickup, which is housed in a carrying case, or the Webster changer which comes in a metal box (without cover), can be used. The long lead to crystal pickup must be shielded if hum is to be minimized.

(c) Where no provisions are made for record reproduction, the same break has to be made into the audio as in No. 1.

In this case, the Garrard changer with crystal pickup in carrying case or the Webster in metal box must be used.

III.

The high quality console radio brings us nearer to the ideal reproduction of LP records. As all console models are not of high quality, only general rules can be made to determine their character. The set should have a pushpull output (2 power tubes). The speaker should be in an inclosed box, not in an open back cabinet. The listener test is, of course, the final judge. Ordinary console sets should be treated in a like manner to the high quality table model in No. 2, and all recommendations apply.

In all high quality consoles, magnetic cartridges are recommended with equipment of this type. This necessitates the use of a pre-amplifier. An economical unit is the G.E. triple-play cartridge RPX 050 with its pre-amplifier. The use of Pickering cartridges is more expensive because two are required — one for 78 rpm and one for LPs and 45s — besides the pre-amplifier. However, its higher voltage output means less hum, and in our opinion its musical quality is superior. The Pickering pre-amplifier No. 230H and record compensator No. 232E gives proper compensation within 2-db of all record makes. The importance of this can be illustrated by the fact that while Columbia and most record manufacturers use a 500 cps bass turnover, London in its *ffrr* recordings, Mercury and Westminster use a higher turnover, and foreign records generally require the lower 300 bass turnover. There are six positions on the Pickering compensator, one of which is a special turnover for old recordings that eliminates surface noise. Self-powered units, such as the Pickering pre-amplifier 230H, are available and easier to install where the user has not extensive technical knowledge. Units taking power from the radio are cheaper and just as good, as their power consumption is negligible. But they require full knowledge of radio circuits to connect.

(a) First discard the original record changer; then install the new one. The Garrard 3-way with the triple-play G.E. cartridge, or the Webster with a set of two Pickering cartridges — one an .0027 for standard and one an .0001 for LP and 45 records — are the two units recom-

mended. Now connect the new pickup to the Pickering equalizer and in turn connect this to the output of the pre-amplifier. Finally, connect the pre-amplifier to its proper source, 110-AC if self-powered or to the radio. The unit is now ready for use.

(b) Where no changer is desired, all electrical connections are the same as above. The General Industries de Luxe 2-way motor can be used. Choose your own combination of speed models: DR 78-33; DZ 78-45; DV 45-33. In the first two models, either the G.E. 3-speed tone arm with built-in play cartridge or the Pickering tone arm (which incidentally tracks perfectly on LPs) with two cartridges are the units to use. A single microgroove cartridge suffices with the last model (DV 45-33). In either case, the same manufacturer's pre-amplifier should be employed.

(c) The problem where there has been no previous record playback equipment resolves itself to one of providing housing for the units. The electrical problems are the same as in (a). The Garrard RC 80 changer with G.E. triple play cartridge is available in an economical case. Or the Webster unit with either G.E. triple play or a set of Pickering cartridges can be used.

IV.

There is really no difference between the addition of LP equipment to amplifier and speaker combination and radio. Your amplifier and speaker may be classified into one of the same categories as the radio. Electrically, there will be no difference in the connecting of these units. The same choice has to be made in determining what combination of units are desirable.

V.

Custom-built equipment requires the use of the best components available within the limit of your budget. We have generally shied away from the use of record changer mechanisms in these installations for the following reasons:

First, the hum level is invariably higher than prevailing high fidelity standards permit. Second, many critical listeners shudder every time one of their valuable records clatters noisily down the changer spindle.

Professional type turntables vary from the Rek-o-Kut 3-way turntable to the Fairchild Proctor continuously variable 16" turntable, which gives a choice of any speed between 16 and 90 rpm. Continuously variable control turntables are recommended to those who have large collections of acoustic records, as many of the latter were made before speeds were standardized and can only be played satisfactorily on a table of this kind. Here, the owner can make his own choice. Our personal preference is for the Pickering unit — tone arm and cartridges. The Pickering record compensator, Model 232E, will when used with the 230H pre-amplifier assure you proper compensation for your different recordings.

In order to simplify the problem for the listener to make conversion himself or to obtain help from any service man, we have suggested various units now available on the market. The writer has used all of them at one time or another with satisfaction. However, many units other than these are available, and some of them are of comparable quality. But be certain that the components are electrically suitable.

The subject of conversion for LP is an extensive one. Of necessity, we have only scratched the surface. However, we believe, that some if not all of the problems of many listeners will be solved providing instructions are carefully followed.

Mozart and Opera Prevail

(Continued from page 222)

and *The Elopement*. Rumor has been persistent that Sir Thomas has been engaged in recording *The Elopement*, but we have not been able to substantiate this; though, it might be mentioned, Sir Thomas once talked with us on this very subject and even spoke of certain artists he had in mind. The Haydn Society's *Don Giovanni* proves a disappointment; it isn't up to the standards set by the old Glyndebourne set. And such high standards for performances of Mozart's operas will have to be met if any new versions of the same operas come forth.

While on the subject of operas, we would like to register a protest that none of the Toscanini performances of the Verdi operas he presented on radio have been placed on records. While it is understandable that the

noted maestro may be justifiably critical of some of the singing in those performances, his own contribution in each case has been far too valuable and too keenly perceptive to deny the eager music listeners who have been clamoring for those famous broadcasts transferred to records. Months ago, rumor was rife that his performance of Verdi's *Otello* would be issued in a recording. In the record business, rumor is by no means just wishful thinking; it is like the smoke that inevitably emanates from the fire. Possibly, the performance of *Otello* has been in preparation for records; but the much coveted approval of the maestro has been denied. It is not for us to chide the maestro — for none admires his efforts toward perfectionism more than your editor — but we do think in the face of things, that it is not likely that a better performance of *Otello* will materialize, or for that matter, better performances of his *La Boheme* and *La Traviata*. Columbia's *La Boheme* has its merits, but they are not comparable to those of the Toscanini broadcast.

Strauss and Wagner

If rumor can be trusted, we should have several more of Richard Strauss' operas in complete performances on records before the year is out. *Der Rosenkavalier* will be issued next month. London promises a completion of *Die Meistersinger* with the same cast heard in their recent second act presentation. And a complete *Tristan and Isolde* is in the offing, though it looks like it will not come from the originally advertised source. Most of these performances will probably emanate from Germany, though Vienna — which has become a musical center and even Mecca in the past year — will undoubtedly contribute its share. Wagner is not as popular on records these days as he has been in past years, but a couple of complete operas should stimulate a new interest in his music.

What has happened to French opera? Though a fine performance of the complete *Pelléas* and *Mélisande* has been available since 1945 on La Voix son Maitre records, Victor has made no effort to transfer it to domestic discs. More's the pity, for even though the sales would not be high, the prestige of such a set in the Victor catalogue would at least show faith in America's musical intelligence. Columbia has been more adventuresome in pressing the French performances of Saint-Saëns *Samson and Dalilah*

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Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffman* and Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortiléges* — the latter a connoisseur's item in the parlance of the record industry. But why Columbia has neglected the French recording of *The Damnation of Faust* — the only Berlioz opera on records — is not understandable.

Though Cetra-Soria is doing a first-rate job in rounding up Italian operas, made in Italy, Victor has neglected several worthwhile performances — featuring Gigli, a tenor star with which to reckon in attracting dollars from American record fans. We were led to believe that the Gigli-Bechi-Caniglia-Barbieri performance of Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera* would be issued domestically a long time ago. The complete performance of Giordano's *Andrea Chenier*, with Gigli in the title role, on the other hand, has seemingly been overlooked or ignored.

In view of the fact that so much fine music is coming forward on records these days, if not always in the finest performances, it would be misleading to have readers or the record companies believe that our interest centers in operatic music. Our editorial ramblings on opera this month have been occasioned by letters and comments of a great many readers; and also by remarks made to us at different times by dealers. Just what has caused this almost insatiable appetite for opera in recent years, both among record buyers and the opera-going public alike, is anyone's guess. Radio has, as already observed, unquestionably been a major contributing cause, but we should not forget the clever publicity and the glamourizing of the stars that prevails. With the help of radio and television, and one should not overlook Hollywood, glamourizing — which has prevailed since the dawn of the theater — has become a potent force. More people today than ever before in this country are seemingly suffering from operatic diabetes — probably not a fatal disease — but one that craves more and more operatic fare. Therefore, for any of the record companies to neglect to issue available recordings from Europe seems not only shortsighted but, as one ardent opera fan recently put it, "downright mean." (The editorial cigar covers our smile.)

* * *

And now, just by way of proving that the best laid plans of mice and men go wrong, we have a little tale to unfold. A friend in Phila-

delphia called us on March 8th to congratulate us on some feature he particularly liked in the February issue, which he had just received that day. *The February issue was mailed on February 19th.* Interested readers and those who register mild protests please note: the mails are very, very slow these days and neither friends, relatives, nor publications are to blame for the length of time it takes to get a parcel post package or a publication mailed second class. Like Plato, we have grown philosophical and refuse to register protests. Moreover, one postal official has informed us that only first class mail gets priority service nowadays.

Don Giovanni from Vienna

MOZART: *Don Giovanni (Dramma Giocoso in Two Acts)*, K. 527; Mariano Stabile (Don Giovanni); Alois Pernstorfer Leporello; Gertrude Grob-Prandl (Donna Anna); Herbert Handt (Don Ottavio); Hilde Konetzni (Donna Elvira); Alfred Poell (Masetto); Hedda Heusser (Zerlina); Oskar von Czerwenka (Commendatore); Vienna Symphony Orchestra and the Vienna State Opera Chorus conducted by Hans Swarowsky. Kurt Rapf at the cembalo. Haydn Society LP set HSLP-2030, 4 discs, \$23.80.

HAVING GIVEN US an appreciable performance of Mozart's *Idomeneo*, The Haydn Society rather lets us down in its new *Don Giovanni*. Let it be said, at the start, this performance offers no serious challenge to the Glyndebourne.

Most of the faults are on the vocal side, though Swarowsky for all his musical competence is not the type of conductor that is ideally suited to this task. Having lived a number of years with the splendid instrumental direction of Fritz Busch, I miss the tidiness and more convincing dramatic animation in Swarowsky's. His opening gun, the overture, seems a rude entrance to this superb music drama — it is a bit incoherent and sadly lacks polish. When the figurative curtain goes up, we are introduced to a vocally dependable Leporello — who treats the role in a more respectable manner than we hear it these days. He is not lacking in humor, but

he prefers to make the humor subtle rather than broad and obvious. I have never been convinced that da Ponte or Mozart thought of Leporello as a clown.

Next we are introduced to a Donna Anna who — though she sang an acceptable Elettra in *Idomeneo* — proves miscast as the noble lady of intense passion. Then comes the Don, entrusted to one of the great singing actors of our times — the veteran, sixty-two year old, Mariano Stabile. Stabile no longer has the vocal requirements to meet the demands of Mozart's music; his upper voice is practically gone. But he still has an understanding of the dramatic action and the ability to make his artistic conception a living force (despite the loss of his striking personality) in the recording. His subtle projection of the text throughout the entire opera is the discerning work of a great artist. I can well imagine Stabile's impersonation of the Don making record history, becoming a source of study and emulation for future Dons. I am not disparaging John Brownlee, whose Don is a noble achievement — more so than Stabile, perhaps — because he had the voice to back up his portrayal when the Glyndebourne recording was made. After all, a Don who has not the vocal splendor to do justice to *Finch' han dal vino* or the *Serenade* — to say nothing of some more ardent sections of the score — seems a bit incongruous, though it will be admitted that Don Giovanni's attractions were by no means all vocal ones. But this is an opera, and the illusion should be vocally sustained.

Like the First Performance

Where record history has been made is in the scholastic preparation of this recorded version of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. I can readily believe that the project of recording this opera "was an undertaking of considerable magnitude, requiring the intensive efforts of the entire staff of The Haydn Society," but I question at what gain. The whole story of the preceedings is given in the preface of the libretto which comes with the records. Being tried and true scholars, the entire staff have been concerned with one idea — to produce a performance conforming as nearly as possible to the first presentation of the opera at Prague back in 1788. The amount of research required to do this must have been enormous, but in the final

analysis one questions what has been accomplished to the good of a projection of the opera from records, and what actually is so much better in the present performance as compared to the Glyndebourne version.

Scholarly Ideals

We are told that "every effort was made to carry out Mozart's intentions exactly, both as to size and placement of the orchestras, and to produce a recording in which the effect of these factors should be heard." I am not convinced that this has been as satisfactorily achieved in a recording as it would be in the theater. Inasmuch as the modern manner of presenting the opera was discarded, naturally the modern piano, used for the recitatives, was thrown out and the harpsichord employed. This was a laudable procedure, and so too was the use of the mandolin in the Don's *Serenade*. But the fact that two valued arias — so long associated with the score — are left out, because they were not in the original Prague performance and only introduced later, at the first Viennese presentation, can hardly fail to prove disappointing to modern listeners. Even though they are presented on the final record face, they cannot be inserted into the context. These are Don Ottavio's lovely *Dalla sua pace* and Donna Elvira's impassioned accompanied recitative, *In quali ecessi*, and aria, *Mi tradi quell'alma ingrata*. The scena and duet for Zerlina and Leoporello, *Restati qua* and *Per queste due manine*, also composed for the Viennese performance, are also omitted. This latter omission of a "buffonesque duet" remains no loss to ears that have not heard it; moreover, it is never done in the opera house.

"To ignore all this is perfectly correct," says the annotator, "the original version of Prague reproduces the work as it lived in Mozart's mind. One should take it as it is, without deletions or additions." The purist was always one to thrust his convictions on others — whether they liked or disliked them, particularly when in control of a presentation. But, I cannot help feeling that if Mozart were living he would have endorsed the inclusion of the two omitted arias.

To return to the singers, Hilde Konetzni's Donna Elvira has more character and stamina than any of the other women, but she lacks some of Luise Helletsgruber's vocal assur-

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ance. Hedda Heusser's Zerlina is over-sweet, but pleasantly sung. Hers is a small voice. Alfred Poell, as Masetto, is perfectly cast — a fine artist. Herbert Handt's Don Ottavio is also on the sweet side; he lacks essential manliness to make the weakest character in the opera convincing.

Were we to hear this performance in the opera house, we would probably applaud it. For though the singing and the orchestral playing are not up to the highest standards, they add up to a good show which can be laid at the door of Mozart. Even if some of the execution is not quite up to the event, all concerned know what it's all about. However, if the Glyndebourne set, or that long-rumored Metropolitan performance ever materializes on LP discs, I'm afraid the historical merits of this performance may not sustain public interest. The reproduction sounds well tonally and the balance of the instrumentation is good. The singing suggests fairly close microphone positions, but it is not out of focus with the orchestra. —P.H.R.

The Metropolitan Version of "The Bat"

STRAUSS, Johann: *Fledermaus*; Lily Pons (Adele), Ljuba Welitch (Rosalinda), Richard Tucker (Alfred), Charles Kullman (Gabriel von Eisenstein), Martha Lipton (Prince Orlofsky), John Brownlee (Dr. Falke), Clifford Harvout (Frank), Paul Franke (Dr. Blind); with the Chorus and Orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera Association conducted by Eugene Ormandy. Columbia LP set SL-108, 2 discs, \$10.90.

AlF THERE IS ONE THING that this set proves, it is that two *Fledermauses* are quite enough. Of the three versions of Strauss's best opera that have appeared in the past four months, the RCA Victor disc is clearly the one unable to meet current competition.

With that point out of the way, let it be said that London's Viennese performance is still ahead in matters of charm, grace, and general all-round atmosphere. Once that is admitted, however, there can be little but praise for the precision and animation of the

Metropolitan Opera forces and the superb recording accomplished by the Columbia engineers at the 30th Street studio.

After attending the opening performance of *Fledermaus* at the Met, I felt that the boys at 39th Street had decided that they were going to prove to the public that they could play Broadway to a standstill. That they succeeded is evident in the response of ticket seekers and in the belief of one official that the Met could put on *Fledermaus* six times a week for six months to full houses.

Now given sufficient time, money, and an able régisseur, I don't feel that matching Broadway is much of a trick. (I would hesitate to say that so doing is the best thing for the Met.) It is, however, high time that most of the American public accepted opera singing as the gruelling, honorable, spiritually rewarding work that it is. Furthermore, I will be glad when people stop being astonished when they hear that a singing actor from the operatic theatre has with ease done something to meet the most exacting Broadway standards. After all, the operatic theatre is so much more demanding than the popular theatre that even an adequate opera singer should be able to match the scores of successful popular singers who earn their bread with that ever-present combination of amplification and the affetuoso style.

But back to this recorded performance. It seems keyed a bit higher here than in the house, and I have the feeling that everyone has tried to make each number a showstopper. In so doing, the performers have, I think, lost some of the dreamy leisure that is one of this score's fundamentals.

Though Tucker and Lipton are as fine as anyone could wish and all of the others save Pons (who has played her press agents' dream image for so long that she seems unnatural as a "lady's maid") are not far behind, their work has little light and shade. Even Eugene Ormandy's magnificent conducting cannot altogether keep things from growing just a shade wearying.

Howard Dietz and Garson Kanin's work with the libretto (which is not provided with the records, by the way) is excellent within the artistic confines it explores, and not far from the spirit of the original. All of the singers, with the exception of Welitch and the chorus part of the time, and Pons almost all of the time, get the words across. —C.J.L.

Record Notes and Reviews



There is in souls a sympathy with sounds, and as the mind is pitched the tear is pleased with melting airs or martial, brisk or grave; some chord in unison with what we hear is touched within us, and the heart replies.

—William Cowper.

Orchestra

XBARTOK: *Dance Suite* (1923); MOZART (arr. Serly): *Fantasia in F minor*, K. 608; The New Symphony Orchestra conducted by Franco Autori. Bartok Record Society LP disc 302, \$5.95.

▲BARTOK'S *Dance Suite*, which he wrote for a festival concerto commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the unification of Pest and Buda into what became known as Budapest, is ample proof of Bartok's mastery of his "musical mother tongue." In five sections, with a reoccurring ritornello and a finale, the work exhibits five stunning symphonic dances of Hungarian yet thoroughly individual flavor. Autori conducts the New Symphony Orchestra, (which sounds a lot newer than when it used to make recordings in the '30's), with authority and exacts the last ounce of vitality, which is considerable, from the score. The recording is extremely good.

The Mozart *Fantasia* was composed for musical clock — actually a sort of mechanical organ — less than a year before Mozart's death. Subsequent arrangements were made for ordinary organ (Virgil Fox: Victor M-1177) and for two pianos and, in 1927, Tibor Serly arranged it for modern orchestra, rais-

ing the key signature, for symphonic purposes, to G minor. Whether this was a good idea or not, at least one authority, Alfred Einstein, has said that "the contradiction between its garb and content (being what it is) the only appropriate one would be for large orchestra." Serly's garb for Mozart is very professional and makes the music sound late baroque — but it doesn't sound like Mozart. The orchestra, which plays very well, is nicely reproduced.

—D.R.

HAYDN: *Symphony No. 6 in D major* ("Le Matin"); *Symphony No. 21 in A major*; Vienna Chamber Orchestra conducted by Franz Litschauer. Haydn Society LP disc HSLP 1025, \$5.95.

HAYDN: *Symphony No. 42 in D major*; *Symphony No. 47 in G major*; Vienna Chamber Orchestra conducted by Franz Litschauer. Haydn Society LP disc HSLP 1026, \$5.95.

▲REVIEWING *Symphonies Nos. 7 and 8 of Haydn*, "Le Midi" and "Le Soir," I expressed a hope that No. 6 would soon materialize. It is equally as attractive as the other two that make up a sort of musical program inspired by the different times of what I would term a perfect day in the composer's youth. The "Sunrise" effect is rather brief, as though Haydn were late for it; the

morning sunshine and the bustle of nature is mainly suggested with a sort of nervous impetus. One would like to know what was in Haydn's mind when he penned the slow movement with its manifold beauties and its contrasting hymnal-like and stately dance themes. It is a lovely movement. The annotator points out the Bachian characteristics of the minuet and the finale.

Symphony No. 21 shows Haydn's progress at this point of his career. Its expressive opening slow movement, rare with him, suggests an emotional mood of deep thinking, though it is not as deeply felt as the opening slow movement of *No. 22* ("The Philosopher"). The dramatic energy of the second movement makes for broad contrast. The minuet is a surprise, for its opening theme proves identical to Mozart's in his *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*. This is a very likeable symphony.

Almost a decade separates the compositions of *Nos. 6* and *21* and *Nos. 42* and *47*. *No. 42* opens with a long movement, so fascinating in its structure that one wishes a score existed. The annotator points out the novelties of the work and the listener might well glance over the notes before hearing the work. This is a robust opus, characteristic of Haydn in one of his most hearty moods.

No. 47 is less carefree and a far finer symphony. Its contrapuntal technique is Haydn at his best. There is dramatic intensity in the opening movement and the finale. The long slow movement has a sentimental gentleness that is disarming, and the minuet is engaging for its contrapuntal tricks.

Litschauer performs these symphonies with appropriate gusto where indicated, but he lacks the graciousness of manner of Scherchen or Beecham, for example, in the lyrical moments. But the conductor obviously knows and admires his Haydn, and this in itself recommends his music-making. The recording is most satisfactory, up to the best standards of the Haydn Society. —P.H.R.

MENDELSSOHN: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and the Rias Chamber Choir conducted by Ferenc Fricsay with Rita Streich and Diana Eustrati (vocal soloists). Decca LP disc DL-8516, \$4.85.

▲ A COMPLETE RECORDING of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* music has long been

overdue. Perhaps the most hugely varied in style and expression of all of Mendelssohn's orchestral works, it is always a delight for its lovely melodies, its fanciful and clean instrumentation, and its sweet humanity.

Another delight is the reappearance on records of the Berlin Philharmonic, a much admired orchestra of prewar days. Under the young and talented Hungarian conductor Ferenc Fricsay, it plays here with most of its old spirit, unanimity, and beauty of tone.

Fricsay's reading, while not as luminous as Toscanini's or as gracious and touching as Beecham's (of the *Overture* — HMV-DB-6820/1), is notable for its clarity and its observance of the musical amenities. And his blending and balancing, ever the sign of masterful conducting, is quite skillful.

The recording is a little disappointing for its somewhat pinched "highs," which spoil some of the excellent vocal work. Surfaces are mostly gritty. —C.J.L.

MILHAUD: *Serenade for Orchestra*; *Five Studies for Piano and Orchestra* (with Paul Badura-Skoda at the piano); *Maximilian Suite*; *Trois Rag Caprices*; Vienna Symphony Orchestra conducted by Henry Swoboda. Westminster LP disc WL 5051, \$5.95.

▲ THIS COLLECTION is a very impressive tribute to Darius Milhaud, often called the most gifted lyric composer of this century. I think it was Virgil Thomson who marveled at Milhaud's endless source of song, his perfectly organic flow of melody which in all his works grows and unfolds in a completely natural manner like a sprouting plant. This might imply that, habitually writing in both a polyphonic and a polytonal manner, Milhaud lets the tunes have their own way and any vertical harmony along the line is accidental, but such is not the case despite improvisatory characteristics in his music. One of the values of this collection is that it covers the period from 1920 to 1930, during which Milhaud, attempting to solve just that problem, was experimenting with polytonality in an attempt to frame his melody with suitable context. With this in mind, the 1921 *Serenade* in three movements might be called the most successful, for Milhaud has not only allowed his melodic gifts free range but has, quite successfully, snared them in the tightest of classical forms. The *Rag Caprices* of 1927

are much more of an improvisatory nature as well they might be.

In the opera *Maximilian* (first produced in 1932), Milhaud wrote his most uncompromising polytonal score, constructing what Slonimsky calls in his notes, "skyscrapers of sound which require a highly developed perception to appreciate and to enjoy." The excerpts here recorded contain some of the orchestral interludes and the overture, in which Milhaud's constant interest in Latin and South American musical forms stand him in good stead as used in the finale of the suite.

Of most interest for the Milhaud student, (and least for the lay listener as they are difficult to listen to) are the *Five Studies* — played to perfection by the amazing twenty-one year-old pianist, Paul Badura-Skoda. In these short but by no means slight pieces, which are actually studies, or études, in the polyphonic style, Milhaud, before our ears, experiments with almost all possible key combinations and attempts to fit them into a form which they, as material, demand. Swoboda conducts as though he both knows and likes the music and the Vienna Symphony never sounded better. And, as the finishing gesture for this fine hommage, Westminster has given a recording which is even better than its usual very high standard.

—D.R.

ROSSINI (arr. Respighi): *La Boutique fantasque*; **SCHUMANN** (arr. Glazounoff): *Carnaval*; **Efrem Kurtz** conducting the **Royal Philharmonic Orchestra**. Columbia LP disc ML 54367, \$5.45.

ROSSINI-RESPIGHI: *La Boutique fantasque*; **The London Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Ernest Ansermet**. London LP disc LLP-274, \$5.95.

▲THE TIE-IN on the coupling is that Kurtz is "a master interpreter of ballet music" and both these scores are orchestrations, for balletic purposes, of piano works. Respighi's treatment of Rossini is the better of the two, though it doesn't compare with his masterly *Rossiniana* (Columbia MX56) in which that composer is practically rewritten, with excellent results. Unfortunately for this disc, Ansermet's new recording of the complete ballet score (London LP 274) is better performed and is technically much the superior. Kurtz' handful of excerpts, which correspond more or less to those done by Goossens (Victor M415 withdrawn), cannot compare. Be-

sides, the recording is bad; Columbia has not issued anything in a long time with such distortions, waver and poor surface.

Although blame for the orchestrated state of *Carnaval* is put on Glazounoff, it isn't entirely his fault: Rimsky-Korsakoff, Liadoff and Tcherepnin all share the responsibility as the orchestration was a hurry-up job for the ballet. For any other purpose than use with the dance, such as listening, for example, it is completely inferior to the original. It is doubtful, however, whether anything could be done for a score which is so patently pianistic. Almost any orchestration would be sure to sound as though Schumann himself had done it and even so professional a job of conducting as in the old Goossens set (Victor M513 withdrawn) couldn't quite hide the fact. Kurtz sounds as though he is leading the melody with his right hand and the accompaniment with his left. He is not helped by a recording which, if possible, is even worse than that lavished on the other work. All in all this disc has just one distinction — which the program note writer neglected to mention — it has a complete claim to authenticity in that the Royal Philharmonic and Kurtz sound exactly like most real ballet orchestras and their usual conductors.

—D.R.

SCHUBERT: *Symphony in B minor* ("Unfinished"); **NBC Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Arturo Toscanini**. RCA Victor 10" LP disc LM-54, \$4.67.

RESPIGHI: *Feste Romane* (Symphonic Poem); **NBC Symphonic Orchestra** conducted by **Arturo Toscanini**. RCA Victor 10" LP disc LM-55, \$4.67.

▲THESE LATEST RECORDINGS of Toscanini have a full concert hall resonance, a handsome sound with realistic detail and clarity of line.

This is the most vivid and gracious of all recorded performances of the Schubert "Unfinished." The songful themes have a heartfelt quality and the dramatic sections of the score have power without bombast. Toscanini does not over-dramatize the contrasts in dynamics, as some conductors like to do, though he does not refute the elemental grandeur of Schubert's dramatic scheme. In the soft passages, the woodwinds and the strings sing with that magic of sound that Toscanini alone can achieve when his heart is touched. Perhaps the pacing of the first

movement is a shade faster than most take it (I have not timed it against any other performance), but the refinement of detail and the power of the execution are most compelling. Only the ending sounds a bit abrupt, but this is as Schubert wrote it. I have never felt those abrupt *fortissimo* chords were quite right.

Respighi's evocation of Roman festivals, ancient, medieval and modern, is too vividly picturesque for its own good. There is too much "frenzied hubbub." Only the third movement, *October Excursions*, rises above the meretricious qualities of its companions. Toscanini has long sponsored this score, and his performance is as vivid and compelling as that of any other conductor. Those who like this music — many are drawn to it because of its extraordinary resplendent orchestration — will find that Toscanini gives it a performance *par excellence*.

—P.H.R.

SCHUBERT: *Symphony No. 3 in D major; Stuttgart Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by W. Van Hoogstraten, and Quartets in C minor; Barchet String Quartet.* Period LP disc SPLP 517, \$5.95.

▲**AVAN HOOGSTRATEN** conducted fairly regularly the Stadium concerts in New York many years ago. Some of the press used to refer to him as the man with the loose trousers and the husband of Elly Ney. He hasn't been around for so long, most of us have forgotten about him; but he now turns up with the Stuttgart Philharmonic and reminds us of old times. This is some of the best music-making I can remember from him; there is less of that nervous tension which kept his trousers quivering and the boys with the press a bit apprehensive. He gets fine results from this orchestra, nicely balanced woodwind playing and generally smooth string playing. Moreover, the recording is exceptionally good, clean and clear with a tonal richness that pleases the ear.

The *Third Symphony* of Schubert is a wholly delightful opus, far less pretentious than his *Second* where he strove for breadth of expression. In the *Third*, Schubert remembers the classical restraint of bygone times, and though we find suggestions of Mozart and even Haydn the work still remains wholeheartedly Schubert. Its melodic content is mostly light and graceful, though the minuet

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has bumpy characteristics of rustic dancing. The keynote to the final *perpetuum mobile*, says one writer, is Rossini, but only in spirit — the music is Schubert.

The *Allegro assai*, for string quartet, is an isolated chamber movement dating from Schubert's twenty-fourth year; which should have been the first movement of a first-rate quartet — it's that good, with its soaring melodies and brilliance. The Barchet Quartet gives a virtuoso performance of this music and by observing the repeat of the first half (exposition) fills the better part of the second side of the disc.

—P.H.R.

Concerto

BARTOK: *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*; Max Rostal (violin) with the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent. London LP disc LLP-302, \$5.95.

▲IT BECOMES increasingly apparent that in the Bartok *Violin Concerto* the slender number of quality works for violin and orchestra has been enlarged by one. This long, powerful, loosely constructed rhapsody based on Hungarian folk tunes and rhythms was composed in 1937-38. Ostensibly, it was planned as a display piece for Zoltan Szekely, but it turned out to be much more than that. That it has its share of technical difficulties, no one will deny; but what one remembers after hearing the work is its imaginative orchestration, its fanciful harmonies, and an intensity of expression that runs like a golden thread throughout the score.

Max Rostal has strong fingers and the gypsy temperament that this music requires. Moreover, his performance lacks the delicate perfume that sometimes marred Menuhin's discourse (RCA Victor set 1120 — with Dorati and the Dallas Symphony Orchestra). Sargent's conducting is tidy and his men responsive, but his work misses the sweep and abandon that Dorati achieved.

The recording is quite good, except that the soloist too often overbalances the orchestra. This disc's musical merits and the fact it is an LP — particularly important in such a composition as this — are sufficient, however, to make it the current choice. —C.J.L.

BEETHOVEN: *Concerto in D for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 61*; Zino Francescatti (violin) with the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy. Columbia LP disc ML-54371, \$5.45.

▲ON MOST OCCASIONS the *Violin Concerto* is not one of Beethoven's most affecting works. It takes the most memorable performance to make the first movement sound anything but discursive and the third movement anything but repetitious. Here in my view is such a performance and the first that I have encountered on records.

The nobility and breadth of Francescatti's conception and the grandeur of his tonal and musical accomplishments reveal every facet of the score's technical and expressive content. Eugene Ormandy is, as always, the perfect accompanist; and the Philadelphia Orchestra plays with the utmost beauty of tone.

The recording is superb, capturing as it does the sound of one of the greatest violinists and our best orchestra in the Academy of Music, surely one of the finest acoustical rooms in America.

—C.J.L.

MENDELSSOHN: *Violin Concerto in E minor, Op. 64*; Isaac Stern (violin) with the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy; **BRAHMS:** *Sonata in D minor, Op. 108*; Isaac Stern with Alexander Zakin (piano). Columbia LP disc ML 4363, \$5.45.

▲THERE were ten different recordings of this concerto in general circulation. Consequently, this one, the eleventh, has pretty tough competition. If we put the Campoli interpretation (London LPS 90) at the top and let the others dangle into infinity, Stern comes midway between the Milstein (Columbia LP ML 4001) and the Grumiaux (Italian Columbia 1126/9). Like the former he forces his high notes into something resembling trumpet calls and like the latter his low notes become lost unless he violently attacks them. Like both of them Mr. Stern seems to have difficulty playing softly. This impression may be due to microphone placement because Ormandy, always politely subdued when the conductor-accompanist, seems to back right off the disc in some sections of this recording. There is, however, the question of articulation and when Ormandy is not even around, as in the cadenza, Stern manages to play not only too loudly but also with a messy rubato

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that runs every note into every other. This is pleasant enough to listen to but rather neglects Mendelssohn's indications. He has also, most unfortunately, adopted the grand manner throughout and "bends the bow" mercilessly. This would not seem half so bad as it does if Ormandy didn't insist on a four-square treatment that turns the performance into a sort of bar-hurdle event with hair-raising hints of possible collision.

In the Brahms the competitive field is somewhat less crowded but the opposition is much stronger, for Stern must compete, among others, with the Menuhins (G-DA2832/4) and Elman (Victor LP LM 30). Here he acquits himself elegantly, playing the unedited version with great technical fluency and some degree of finesse. Throughout most of the work he is still too loud and drowns out the accomplished Mr. Zakin but, for the lovely Handel-esque second movement, he softens down and does some extremely fine violin playing. The recording is average, but quite acceptable.

—D.R.

MOZART: *Piano Concerto No. 19 in F major, K. 459; Piano Concerto No. 20 in D minor, K. 466.* Clara Haskil (piano) with the Winterthur Symphony Orchestra conducted by Henry Swoboda. Westminster LP disc WL 5054, \$5.95.

▲FOR MANY YEARS good recordings of these concertos have been needed. Now Westminster has blessed us with superb performances and fine recordings of each — all on one disc. Clara Haskil — whose reputation in Europe is legend — deserves to be better known over here, and this recording should do the trick.

The *F major Concerto* is one of Mozart's happiest inspirations, with a wonderful rondo which, Girdlestone says, "is one of the most unblushing borrowings the concerto makes from the *opera buffa*, a regular comic finale, chattering, busy about nothing, quite brainless, but scored and eked out with irresistible wit." Miss Haskil plays it almost as wittily as Mozart wrote it, which cannot be said either for the Schnabel (Victor M-389 withdrawn) or the Boskoff (Decca 25041/3 withdrawn) interpretations. The *D minor*, on the other hand, reveals a serious Mozart, concerned, as the excellent notes to this disc put it, with the "inner man." Perhaps this is the reason the concerto is usually so badly per-



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formed. During the 19th-century this concerto was the best (or the only one) known. Einstein has said: "This fact reveals a great deal about the 19th-century which did not understand the sublime humor of the *F major concerto*, but well understood what distinguished the *D minor* . . . passion, pathos, drama. This concerto made it possible to stamp Mozart as a forerunner of Beethoven." And most of the time it is played like Beethoven. This is particularly true of Bruno Walter's recording (Victor M-120 withdrawn). Miss Haskil has the technical equipment to handle the work, unlike Nikisch (Telef. 1643/6 withdrawn) and Lili Kraus (Vox PL-6290); and she also knows how to subdue technique to subtlety, unlike Iturbi (Victor M-794 withdrawn) and Fischer (Victor M-223 withdrawn). The result is not only the best *D minor* recorded, in my estimation, but also the best performance heard in a long time. It is regrettable that Swoboda and the Winterthur aren't up to her; the conductor lacks her understanding of the music. There is a well nigh disastrously tardy entry of the woodwind at the end of the slow movement of the *F major* and the orchestra sounds as though it is dropping things throughout the *D minor*. Of course it is tribute to the really excellent recording that you can hear all this unintended orchestral sound. —D.R.

PROKOFIEFF: *First Concerto for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 10*; Andor Foldes (piano) and the Lamoureux Orchestra under M. Martinon; *Contes de la vieille grand'mere, Op. 31*; *Four Pieces for Piano, Op. 32*; Andor Foldes (piano). Vox-Polydor LP disc PL 6590, \$5.95.

▲THE CONCERTO is the earliest large-scale Prokofieff to be recorded, and in it one finds that the twenty-year-old composer, from the very first, revealed his individual qualities. The work could not have made much of a hit in 1911 for it was "advanced" in a way calculated to infuriate the St. Petersburg Conservatory. It opens and closes with a romantic parody of Czerny and his school, much in the manner of the famous "Rachmaninoff-parody" of the *C major* concerto. Its continuous movements contain a small parade, a wistful slow section and a wonderfully sardonic and pianistically acrobatic finale, very much akin to the *Op. 11, Toccata*, (Horowitz, Victor 12-0428). Testimony to

the vitality of the work is found in the critic N. Bernstein's sullen remark, after the premiere, "What Prokofieff needs is a strait-jacket." Foldes plays with the dryly percussive technique which Prokofieff requires and the Lamoureux under Mariton sounds splendid.

Prokofieff wrote the lyric, *Tales of an Old Grandmother*, (of which he has recorded numbers 2 and 3 in Victor M 477, withdrawn), when he was in America in 1918. At that time he wrote back home: "I wandered about the enormous park in the center of New York and, looking up at the skyscrapers, thought with cold fury of the marvelous American orchestras that cared nothing for my music and of the critics who reiterated what had been said a hundred times and who balked so at anything new, and of the managers who arranged the same hackneyed programs fifty times over." Eventually, a publishing house, commissioned this exquisite piano suite, of which the British pianist, Frank Merrick, has said: "I often regret that there are not several books of the *Op. 31* instead of only one." When it was finished, the publishers, to their undying regret, turned it down. The four piano pieces, also written in 1918, are *Dance, Minuet, Galop* (also in the Prokofieff album), and *Waltz*. They are most pleasant to listen to. The recording, with the exception of the last several seconds of the concerto where the engineer, apparently expecting an explosion, turned down the volume, is quite realistic.

—D.R.

RACHMANINOFF: *Concerto No. 3 in D minor, Op. 30*; Witold Malcuzynski (piano) with the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Paul Kletzki. Columbia LP disc ML 4369, \$5.45.

▲IF THE READER has not read Lionel Salter's review of this recording in the January 1951 issue of *The Gramophone*, he might do so. It tells a story that could hardly fail to be repeated. Malcuzynski, the virtuoso, has a virtuoso's holiday at the expense of the orchestra, the recording engineers and everybody else. He has assumed an undisputed center of the stage, as Mr. Salter points out, and gone to town on his own ignoring the conductor's feeling for tempo, etc. "He throws Rachmaninoff's *pp* and *p* markings overboard, and in the first movement the orchestra is only dimly to be apprehended in the offing," says Mr. Salter. Later, the orchestra man-

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Blanche THEBOM

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and the NBC Symphony Orchestra

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ages to assert itself, and "as a result the balance improves somewhat in the finale (if you don't mind it all being a bit breathtaking and incoherent) becoming quite exciting." That's the story in a nutshell.

What possessed Mr. Malczynski, who previously gave us some firstrate performances of the Chopin concertos, is anyone's guess. It is an assumption, which Mr. Salter indulges in, that he regarded the orchestral part of the work less valuable than the piano part. To be sure, Rachmaninoff wrote an extraordinarily difficult piano part, but there are no indications in the score that he demanded to be given a spotlight apart from his orchestra. Maybe, Mr. Malczynski wishes us to realize his muscular powers, one thing the music requires. That the poetically expressive qualities of Rachmaninoff are lost in the display of his power doesn't concern him. I wouldn't be surprised to hear that the pianist was a firstrate wrestler. In some ways, this display of power and brilliant technique has its excitement, but unfortunately at the expense of Rachmaninoff. I'll stay with the old Rachmaninoff-Ormandy set until some less "high minded" pianist comes along. Even at that, I'd still keep the former as a souvenir of a great pianist I always admired.

—P.H.R.

WIENIAWSKI: *Concerto No. 2 in D minor, Op. 22; Mischa Elman (violin) with the Robin Hood Dell Orchestra of Philadelphia conducted by Alexander Hilsberg.* Victor 10" LP disc LM-53, \$4.67.

▲LEOPOLD AUER, Elman's teacher, recommended Wieniawski's music to his pupils "because it was brilliant and written with an eye to virtuoso effect." Auer was not, however, blind to the musical worth of Wieniawski, for — writing about this concerto — he pointed out that it "seems to have been written under the influence of Gounod, Saint-Saëns and, perhaps, Lalo." Auer knew intimately the works of these composers and should have known. Perhaps these influences are the reasons that this concerto has retained popular favor in the concert hall; it affords agreeable and not unfamiliar sounds to the ears of unretentive listeners and at the same time exploits the technical accomplishments of the player.

Both Heifetz and Stern have recorded this concerto. As I recall these performances, Heifetz's was the most luminous and techni-

cally proficient. It was played back in 1935 — the ripest period of the violinist's career, in my estimation. Now Elman makes his bid for acclaim by the ever-growing LP audience. Elman is a sound player and he probably knows this work backwards. His tone seems a bit thin at times, but there is more maturity in his playing today than in the days when his G string was regarded as the most luscious of all. His interpretation of this work seems more thoughtful than it was twenty years ago. Elman's tone — as of old — ripens in the familiar *Romance*; here he stresses sentiment more than Heifetz did. Hilsberg gives the noted violinist a well-coordinated orchestral accompaniment, and the summer version of the Philadelphia Orchestra acquires itself with honors. The recording is tonally pleasing, but it is not one of Victor's best extended-range jobs.

—J.N.

Chamber Music

BERG: Lyric Suite; The Juilliard String Quartet — R. Mann, R. Koff (violins); R. Hillyer (viola); A. Winograd (cello).

Columbia 10" LP disc ML 2148, \$4.00.

▲**OF ALL OF SCHOENBERG'S PUPILS**

Alban Berg achieved the greatest variety of expression within the so-called twelve-tone system. As so often happens in life and art, a pioneer points the way and one of his disciples infuses the master's principles with new and greater meaning. In his early music Schönberg revealed himself as an impassioned Romantic with Wagnerian characteristics but after working out his twelve-tone system his music became almost completely mechanical. As others have said, his new music avoided emotional ostentation and "confined itself to bare, impersonal melodic lines" (Ulrich). Berg evidently could not, or would not, divorce himself completely from his natural feelings which embraced the fervor of the late 19th century Romantic school. There is in Berg some of the same type of romantic richness that we find in Mahler. Had the composer come under the Austrian master, his music might have been even more freely impassioned than it is. Berg was a sensualist and not even the austerity of Schönberg's abstractions could submerge his true emotions. It is a great pity that Berg

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did not live longer, or write more works; for, with his refusal to negate expressive warmth in his handling of the atonal medium, he created more accessible music, in my estimation, than his teacher Schönberg.

Of the three recorded versions of this suite, one of Berg's finest works, the present is the most vivid reading of the score. I have never heard the broadly melodic *Adagio appassionato*, in which the height of lyric-dramatic expression is reached, played with such affecting intensity. These young players have the dramatic fire of youth and an engrossing earnestness in all their performances of modern music which heightens the degree of communication. There may have been more refinement of detail in the playing of the old Galimar Quartet, but the dynamic range of that performance was not as well served by the 1937 recording. Though the recent Pro Arte performance was a fine one (see April 1950 issue) I like even better this one by the Juilliard group. Excellent recording.

—P.H.R.

BLISS: *String Quartet No. 2 in F minor (1950); Griller String Quartet. London 10" LP disc LPS 299, \$4.95.*

▲BLISS' CLARINET QUINTET and *First String Quartet* remain, in my estimation, among the best modern chamber works to come out of England. His *First String Quartet*, which dates from 1941, is a less studied work than his *Second*. The present opus is dedicated to the highly efficient Griller Quartet, and seems to have been written with the idea of exploiting the ensemble's virtuosic abilities. The thematic division in the first movement is effectively but strangely contrasted — its momentum changes almost constantly and the musical ideas do not dovetail each other quite as one would expect. The slow movement is introspective — a sort of dream world is created with muted strings. The scherzo, played at top speed, is almost quarrelsome, and the writing seems tricky throughout. The finale, alternating between slow and fast, with its introspective moments impresses me as more genuinely felt than any of the other movements. This is a work to study with the score, and one hearing cannot honestly predict its enduring qualities.

The Grillers give this music a brilliant performance, and London provides fine reproduction.

—P.H.R.

X BRAHMS: *Quartet in B flat major, Op. 67; Busch Quartet. Columbia LP disc ML 4330, \$5.45.*

▲WHILE not the greatest of Brahms' chamber works, this quartet is one of his most popular. This is Brahms in one of his frankly romantic moods, apparently trying "to live down his reputation for serious-mindedness." This is music that should be played warmly and lightheartedly, for surely the work suggests the mood of a country holiday with the hunting call motif of the opening movement and its general spirit of revelry.

A recording of this work has long been needed, but I do not think the present performance quite meets requirements. The Busch ensemble hardly catch, much less convey, the humorsome qualities of the music. The playing is often heavy-handed and not always shipshape. The first violinist's tone is frequently edgy and his intonation wavers now and again. The best playing is found in the finale. The recording, made in England, remains satisfactory throughout. —P.H.R.

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FAURE: *Piano Quartet No. 1 in C minor, Op. 15; Artur Rubinstein and Members of the Paganini Quartet.* RCA Victor 10" LP disc LM-52, \$4.67.

▲ A TRULY HANDSOME PERFORMANCE of one of the most ingratiating and delightful of all French chamber works. It seems only yesterday that the Robert Casadesus — Calvet Quartet Members version of this work appeared on records — but yesterday was all of 15 years ago. While I would say that Casadesus' highly sensitive artistry is often most rewarding in the older recording, I cannot disparage Rubinstein's warm-hued and fluent playing here. This new version has more nuance of line and color, because of the fine recording, than any previous version of this quartet has obtained. This is one of Fauré's most spontaneous works — full of irresistible rhythmic impetus — the sort of thing that immediately catches and holds the listener's fancy. There is youthful fervor and elation in this music, which though it has its formal design nonetheless owns the characteristics of a *divertissement* like the sonata (Op. 13) which preceded it.

Victor has given these fine artists first-rate recording — very lifelike, smooth and clean. Now that Victor has issued the *First Piano Quartet*, maybe they might break down and issue the *Second*, which is now available in a fine performance and recording by Marguerite Long, Jacques Thibaud, Maurice Vieux and Pierre Fournier (H.M.V. DB5103/06).

—P.H.R.

HINDEMITH: *Sonata for Flute and Piano* (1936); **MARCELLO:** *Sonata in F*; **CAPLET:** *Reverie; Petile Valse*; **SAINT SAENS:** *Ascanio — Airs de Ballet*; **DE BUSSY:** *Syrinx*; **DUTILLEUX:** *Sonatine for Flute and Piano*; **William Kincaid** (flute) and **Vladimir Sokoloff** (piano).

Columbia LP disc ML-4339, price \$5.45.

▲ NOT LONG AGO we reviewed an LP disc of a flute recital by the promising young Frenchman, Jean-Pierre Rampal (Mercury LP MG10067) that featured the Hindemith *Flute Sonata*. Here is a similar record by a veteran American performer, who for many years has been solo flutist of the Philadelphia Orchestra. Kincaid is ranked along with Georges Laurent, Arthur Cleghorn and Marcel Moyse as one of the top men in his field. Students of the flute should obtain this record and analyze carefully the art of a master

technician. Observe the impeccable phrasing, the sweet, limpid tone, the carefully ordered planning of his interpretative structure.

It soon becomes quite obvious in the course of that unpleasant duty, the comparison test, that the Hindemith work means more to the young Gallic mentality than it does to the veteran of more than twenty years of Friday afternoon matinees at the Academy of Music. There is not one crotchet out of place in Kincaid's performance, yet somehow or other, in spite of (or because of) his superior equipment, his playing seems on the surface.

The Marcello work is more his meat, much like the grand job he did on the *Telemann Suite* (Victor set M-890); the other selections are diverting if not overly substantial. Dutilleux is a young Frenchman, pupil of Henri Busser and Grand Prix de Rome winner (1938), who writes in a conservative, utilitarian style generally associated with conservatory test pieces. Excellent recording.

—A.W.P.

MILHAUD: *Quartets No. 14 and 15, Octet; The Budapest Quartet.* Columbia LP disc ML-4332, \$5.45.

▲ IT WOULD BE TEMPTING to call this record and everything on it a miniature circus if most of the musical and technical craftsmanship were not so solid and if most of the expression were not so friendly, intimate, and spirited. The foregoing sentence, translated into understandable English, means that Milhaud has written two quartets, which played together make an octet, and that the Budapest, after playing the two quartets, have performed the octet by playing one of the quartets simultaneously with their recording of the other quartet.

If that is all clear, let us go on to say that the quartets are entirely memorable for the quality of style, texture, and sentiment. The octet, which on first hearing, sounds impenetrably complex and more than a little discursive, gains in clarity and point on repetition. Though I doubt that the standard repertory will absorb the thorny octet, I believe that there is room for the quartets, which seem to me worthy of anybody's time.

The Budapest String Quartet, which has been occasionally remiss in the presentation of contemporary music, do their duties admirably. Columbia's engineers have done theirs (even including the tricks) in similar fashion. Quiet surfaces.

—C.J.L.

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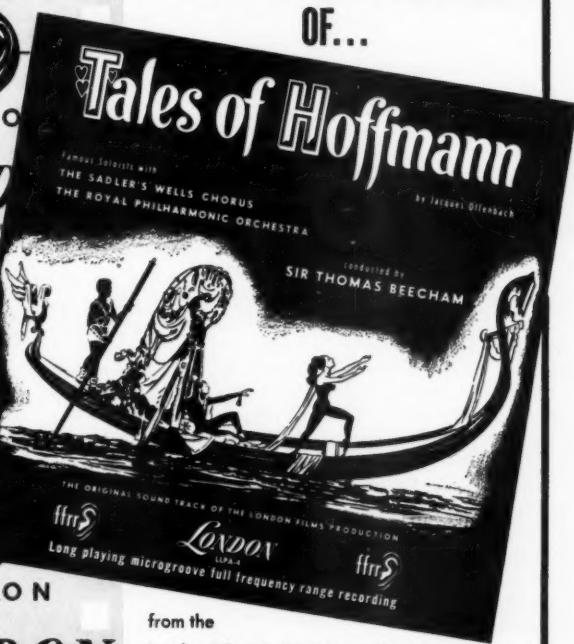
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MOZART: *Divertimento No. 17 in D major K.334 for Strings and 2 Horns; Members of the Vienna Octet.* London LP disc LLP 235, price \$5.95.

▲IT IS VERY UNLIKELY that these anonymous Viennese players were selected by London Records for any special ability or any particular affinity with this score. Any large city of cultural aspirations in Germany, Italy, the United States, or even England could provide sidemen of comparable ability.

PAGANINI: *Caprices, Op. 1, Nos. 5, 18, 21, 11, 13, 16, 9, 1, 14, 17, 24; Michael Rabin (violin).* Columbia 10" LP disc ML-2168, \$4.00.

▲MICHAEL RABIN, whose age is fourteen or thereabouts, is, according to all who attended his recent Carnegie Hall recital, the postwar instrumental *wunderkind*. The appearance of this excellently recorded disc which offers Master Rabin's expert execution of a handful of Paganini's quite difficult *Caprices* should give the news a wider circulation.

—C.J.L.

As for the playing on this record: it is sloppy, mannered, vitiated by unwholesome ritards, pauses and other cute tricks that the Viennese consider "artistic." It bears no comparison with the Lener — Brain version (Columbia set M-379) or even the ancient Hamilton Harty set (Columbia M-207, withdrawn), which, despite the use of an orchestral string section, doubled horns and the omission of two movements, was very pleasing in its time. Whatever orchids bloom here must be assigned to London's engineers.

—A.W.P.

Keyboard

BEETHOVEN: *Sonata in A flat major, Op. 26; GRIEG: Lyric Pieces; Walter Gieseking (piano).* Columbia LP disc ML-4334, \$5.45.

▲THIS SONATA has been called a hybrid. In the sequence of Beethoven's piano sonatas, it does seem to look backward with its opening movement which utilizes a theme and variations instead of the usual sonata form. As one writer has said, its order and character of movements is new and very romantic. The fine slow movement, a funeral march, is the heart of the work, rightfully

placed to be set off by the rushing scherzo and the swift finale. Gieseking seems to me an ideal interpreter of this work; his playing has sensitivity and rhythmic fluidity. There is elegance in his performance of the opening *Andante con Variazioni* and a romantic warmth to his funeral march. I find that his interpretation is even more winning than the recent Backhaus version.

The Grieg pieces are *Butterfly, Op. 43, No. 1, Little Bird, Op. 43, No. 4, Wedding Day at Troldhaugen, Op. 65, No. 6, Solitary Traveller, Op. 43, No. 2* and *To the Spring, Op. 43, No. 6*. By no means as strong fare as the Beethoven sonata, these little works are played so ingratiatingly that one applauds the pianist's logic in keeping them in his repertory. The recording, made in England, is most satisfying.

—P.H.R.

BEETHOVEN: *Sonata in C minor, Op. 111, and Andante favori in F major; Jacob Lateiner (piano).* Columbia LP disc ML 4335, \$5.45.

▲LATEINER is a young pianist who reveals an unusual coordination and grasp of musical values. His performance of Beethoven's last sonata has rightful strength of purpose, though it lacks for me the maturity of interpretation found in Solomon's version (H.M.V.) which has not yet been issued in this country. Nor is the recording quite up to the standards of the English one, yet I am sure most will find it more than satisfactory. The *Andante favori* was intended originally as the slow movement of the celebrated "Waldstein" sonata, but Beethoven withdrew it because he thought it was too long. While Lateiner does not fully capture the ingratiating and intimate qualities inherent in this work, his is the best version on records heard to date by me.

—P.H.R.

E. POWER BIGGS RECITAL: *Air and Gavotte (Samuel Wesley), Adagio for Glass Harmonica (Mozart), Chaconne (Louis Couperin), Prelude on the Ave Verum Corpus (Mozart), Pastorale (Milhaud), Toccata (Mulet), Westminster Suite (English Music for the Organ arranged by E. Power Biggs).* Columbia LP disc ML-4331, \$5.45.

▲THIS RATHER TASTY RECITAL of fresh pieces is perhaps distinguished more by faithful recording than by any extraordinary music-making by E. Power Biggs. To be

sure his work is ever efficient and well informed, but his slightly heaviness of rhythm, his unimaginative registrations, and his sometimes lifeless phraseology keep his interpretations from enjoying any sustained flight.

The *Westminster Suite*, by the way, is made up from John Dunstable's *The Agincourt Hymn*, William Byrd's *Pavane: The Earls of Salisbury*, and Henry Purcell's *The Bell Symphony on the Westminster Abbey Peal, A Fanfare, Trumpet Tunes I and II with Interlude*, and *Voluntary on the Doxology*. It was recorded in Symphony Hall, Boston. The other selections were accomplished at St. Paul's Chapel, Columbia University. —C.J.L.

DEBUSSY: *Images: Books I and II*; Claudio Arrau (piano). Columbia 10" LP disc ML 2162 \$4.00.

▲CONSIDERING the popularity of the rest of Debussy's piano music, the six *Images* have been relatively neglected. Arrau and Columbia do a great service in making available some of the composer's finest work for the solo instrument. The first book, written in 1905, opens with *Reflets dans l'eau*, which is perhaps the most often heard of the set and of which Giesecking's recording (Columbia C-68575D withdrawn) is the best known. Arrau does it quite differently. The reflections still reflect but they don't run into each other as they do in the Giesecking. Enchanting as that is, Arrau's tonal chiaroscuro might have been what Debussy had in mind when he spoke of the "harmonic chemistry" of the work. The *Hommage à Rameau* which follows, and which Suarès calls one of the finest piano works since Beethoven's last sonatas, already has a nearly perfect recorded performance by Marcelle Meyer (Discophiles Française A-21) but Arrau doesn't suffer too much by comparison. The third section of the first book, *Mouvement*, an extremely busy piece of music which eventually spins itself into invisibility, received a brilliant performance by the extremely able Jean Doyen fairly recently (H.M.V. W 1593) which somewhat outdistances, in lightness of touch at any rate, this interpretation. ■■■

The 1907 book is even less known than the 1905. *Cloches à travers les feuilles* has been recorded by Giesecking (Columbia 17218D withdrawn) but, perhaps because of inadequate reproduction, it does not seem, as does the Ar-

rau, to echo, not only bells through leaves, but, in the words of E. Robert Schmitz, also the most subtle moods of the "vie intérieure." Meyer has also an extremely fine performance on discs of the *Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut...* which follows, but Arrau plays it more slowly and, perhaps for this reason, seems to reach more deeply the heart of one of Debussy's most profoundly lovely harmonic investigations. When one discovers that the opening figures, surely some of the most beautifully original written in this century, are only plain old ninth chords transformed by the subtle alchemy of the composer, one begins to realize the genius of Debussy in its essence. *Poissons d'Or* completes the collection in a superb performance that makes Rubinstein's ver-

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sion (in Victor M998) look somewhat like an aquariumed whale. Oscar Thompson has written: "For Debussy, the piano is a confidant, not a herald. It insinuates much; it never proclaims." Arrau understands and respects this truth and Columbia has given him all the technical assistance he deserves in presenting this excellent interpretation. — D.R.

DEBUSSY: *Children's Corner Suite*; **SCHUMANN:** *Forest Scenes, Op. 82*; **Robert Casadesus** (piano). Columbia LP disc ML 4366, \$5.45.

▲**CASADESUS**, in this recording, continues an interpretation of Debussy, begun with the *Préludes, Book Two* (Columbia LP ML 4019) which is, by current Debussy-playing standards, revolutionary: he presses the damper pedal only when the score indicates that he do so. This gives his performances a clean precision usually lacking in recorded Debussy. Particularly is this approach necessary for the subtly naive "children's" suite which was written in 1908 for Debussy's five-year-old daughter. Both the Cortot (Victor 7147/8 withdrawn) and the Gieseking (Columbia M314 withdrawn) performances rather suffered from a delicate and somewhat "atmospheric" approach which is the antithesis of the music. Casadesus does not attempt to gild the lily in this manner; he gives a brilliant and often percussive performance which sacrifices none of the inherent tenderness of the work. *Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum*, which Debussy called "a sort of hygienic and progressive gymnastics . . . therefore to be played every morning, before breakfast . . ." is given quite straightforwardly, allowing the music to speak for itself and dodging the usual sly, and very adult, "isn't this funny" interpretation. *Jimbo's Lullaby* is played too loudly; the dynamic range is supposed to be from *p* to *ppp*, an elusive feat for recording technique, but it is also played very tenderly. Casadesus' *Serenade for the Doll* accentuates the syncopation while his *Snow Is Dancing* sounds much more like a very virile toccata than the musical petit-point usually heard. *The Little Shepherd* seems to suffer from this matter of fact treatment but the reason might be that it is a relatively slight piece of music. Finally there is a bang-up performance of *Golliwog's Cake-Walk*. The recording is excellent and, all in all, Casadesus' admirable performance seems the only one that hasn't, some-

where along the line, falsified the composer's intentions.

The smiling little Schumann suite, with its nine small movements, all with titles redolent of a 19th-century *Naturkult* has been recorded in a completely authoritative manner by Clara Haskil (London LA 127) and to whom, by comparison, Casadesus comes in second. One of the reasons is that the Schumann pieces have quite enough whimsy of their own and a slightly percussive performance seems to comment too heavily on their admitted cuteness. If anything, these masterly little vignettes should be "tenderized" in the way Miss Haskil has done. The recording is quite good. — D.R.

HANDEL: *Sonatas for Violin and Figured Bass* — *Sonata in A major* (Gesellschaft No. 3); *Sonata in G minor* (G. No. 10), Columbia 10" LP disc ML 2149. *Sonata in F major* (G. No. 12); *Sonata in D major* (G. No. 13), Columbia 10" LP disc ML 2150. *Sonata in A major* (G. No. 14); *Sonata in E major* (G. No. 15), Columbia 10" disc ML 2151. Played by Alexander Schneider (violin), Ralph Kirkpatrick (harpsichord), and Frank Miller (cello). \$4.00 each disc.

▲**THE IDEA HERE** has been to perform these works in the manner that they were played in Handel's day — as trio-sonatas. Handel wrote them for flute, oboe or violin with figured bass (realized usually on the harpsichord) and with cello *ad lib.* Though it was the practice in Handel's time to perform these works with the added string instrument, the cello could have been advantageously omitted in the recording in my estimation for cleaner articulation from Kirkpatrick's harpsichord. Some of the accompanying figuration is submerged. The purist will probably violently disagree with me, and in a much as the cello does enrich the ensemble the effect is not unagreeable to the ear.

Of the six sonatas from Handel's so-called *Opus 1*, the three most popular — Nos. 3, 13 and 15 — have been recorded previously by noted violinists with piano accompaniment, and at least one — No. 15 — has been recorded in trio version by oboe, harpsichord and cello. As to the suitability of the modern piano, that is an argument for the purist; for most of us today are hardly opposed to it.

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Further, it should be pointed out, that existing recordings of some of these works have interpretative attractions that are not seriously challenged by the present performances. There are, for example, earlier recordings of the *A major* (No. 3) by Menges and Beattie, of the *E major* (No. 15) by Menuhin and Endt, and of the *D major* (No. 13) by Enesco and Schlussel and also by Goldberg and Moore which, from the evidence of the records, often offer more ingratiating rhythmic articulation than we have here. The Goldberg-Moore performance is especially rewarding for its expressive dynamics — the wonderful *crescendo* at the end of the third movement being a case in point.

There is both eloquence and a lyric charm in the melodic simplicity of these Handel chamber works which recommends them to players and listeners alike. The three new works to recording are worthy competitors to the better known ones and welcome on records. The performances are technically proficient and tonally pleasing, neat and tidy, for the players are undeniably accomplished chamber players. Mr. Miller's role is a rather self-effacing one, which he handles competently.

—P.H.R.

HOROWITZ: *Rakoczy March* (after Hungarian Rhapsody No. 15 by Liszt); **Vladimir Horowitz** (piano). RCA Victor 45 rpm disc 49-3154, \$1.05.

▲THIS is the sort of thing that Horowitz does best. It is one of those "wow" pieces that audiences wait through a whole concert for. As it is played here, it cannot fail to delight Horowitz's many admirers. —C.J.L.

MODERN WALTZES FOR TWO PIANOS: *Une Valse* (Auric), *Second Avenue Waltzes* (Rieti), *Synthetic Waltzes* (Thomson), *Valse brève* (Sauquet), *Valses I and II* (Tailleferre), *Night Waltz* (Bowles); **Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale** (duo-pianos). Columbia 10" LP disc ML-2147, \$4.00.

▲GOLD AND FIZDALE, our very best two-piano team, continue here their admirable practice of giving us fresh works of good quality.

Though Auric's piece is somewhat shapeless and Bowles's leans a bit hard on Ravelian procedures, even these have at the very least the elements of charm, grace, and melody

that inform all of the compositions represented. Two of these others offer more. There is the additional delight of warmth and spirit in Tailleferre's two waltzes, and considerable brilliance and wit in Thomson's *Synthetic Waltzes*.

The *Second Avenue Waltzes* form the most lengthy portion of this recital. This music is perhaps best known as the original material that Rieti worked from to create an accompaniment for Balanchine's ballet *Waltz Academy*. The quick ear will catch in the final number a direct quotation from Verdi's *Traviata*.

Excellent recording from 30th Street with surfaces that do not match in quality.—C.J.L.

SCARLATTI: *Eight Sonatas* — in *C major* (Longo 129), in *C sharp minor* (L. 256), in *D major* (L. 14), in *F major* (L. 119), in *A major* (L. 45), in *B flat* (L. 46), *D major* (L. 265), in *G major* (L. 209); **Kathleen Long** (piano). London 10" LP disc LPS-314, \$4.95.

SCARLATTI: *Nine Sonatas* — in *G minor* (Longo 126), in *G major* (L. 127), in *E*

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minor (L. 321), in E major (L. 466), in C major (L. 457), in C minor (L. 10), in F major (L. 279), in D minor (L. 215), in D major (L. 415); **Ralph Kirkpatrick** (harpsichord). Concert Hall 10" LP disc CHS-1070, \$4.67.

▲ **NEITHER MISS LONG** or Mr. Kirkpatrick has, what my friend Harold Schonberg calls, the "unquenchable flame" of Mme. Landowska, but both have musical attributes that cannot be denied. Miss Long's pianism is always clean, unexaggerated and friendly. Mr. Kirkpatrick is the scholarly musician, sometimes a bit stuffy, but always competent and assured. My favorite Scarlatti recital — by Casadesus, Columbia set 372 — has not come to LP as yet, but I have not given up hope that it will. Miss Long made some of her group previously on 78 rpm discs, but adds four new ones, to me, on records — Nos. 14, 209, 265 and 269.

Most of Mr. Kirkpatrick's group appeared previously in a Concert Hall Limited Edition. As the tonal quality of the recording is consistent throughout, it may be that he recorded the group for the LP. The choice between the two recitals lies in one's preference of the two instruments. The piano playing of Miss Long seems to me in keeping with the right way to handle harpsichord music on the modern instrument. Every note is clearly articulated and the sound of her instrument is faithfully caught by the recording. So too is that of Mr. Kirkpatrick, but here the sound is more steely and brittle. There is a lot of healthy vigor in his playing, which is not found in the piano version. As the two recitals offer completely different programs, many listeners will want them both. And, as Scarlatti wrote for the earlier instrument, it might be well for listeners to become acquainted with his delightful short sonatas in the manner in which they were originally performed. The variety of moods that Scarlatti was able to create makes programs like these completely enjoyable, and it should be observed that both artists have chosen their individual selections with an eye to contrast. —J.N.

WALTZES FROM THE CLASSICS; First Piano Quartet. RCA Victor set WDM-1477, 3 7" discs, \$3.65 (also 78 rpm set, \$4.75).

▲ **THE machine-like precision of the First Piano Quartet** recalls the old pianola. For

those who like novelties of this kind, this album will probably appeal, but for how long I wouldn't predict. Included are Strauss' *The Blue Danube*, Tchaikovsky's *Waltz of the Flowers*, Chopin's *Grande Valse Brillante*, the Gounod-Liszt *Faust Waltzes*, *Four Waltzes* by Brahms from *Op. 39*, and Kreisler's *Liebeslied*. Victor's engineers certainly know how to handle the percussive sounds of this ensemble.

—J.N.

Voice

AMERICAN SONGS: *My Days Have Been So Wondrous Free* (Hopkinson); *The Bird* (Billings, arr. Daniel); *O'er the Hills Far Away, Beneath a Weeping Willow's Shade*, and *My Love Is Gone to Sea* (Hopkinson, arr. Daniel); *The Death of Gen. Washington* (French); *Bunker Hill*, or *The American Hero* (Law); *Go, Congregation, Go* (Antes); *I am the Rose of Sharon* (Billings, arr. Daniel); *Song over a Child* (Webb, arr. Daniel); **Margaret Truman (soprano) with the **Robert Shaw Chorale**, RCA Victor Orchestra conducted by **Robert Shaw**. RCA Victor 10" LP disc LM-57, \$4.45 (also sets WDM-1445, \$4.90 and DM-1445, \$5.00).**

▲ **MISS TRUMAN**, in selecting a group of songs from the colonial period of American history, inadvertently calls attention to her present background in Washington, and the program annotator finds this a reason to endorse her chosen program. While these first, so-called "art-songs" of our country are not in advance of or up to the standards of many European composers' outputs of the same period, they are nevertheless appealing, and I have always wondered why some of our leading singers have neglected them. Living in the White House, Miss Truman has no doubt been most cognizant of our historical background as well as that of these early composers. I hardly think that she required much urging by outsiders to include these songs in her repertory. That the collection makes a pleasantly diverting program, few will deny. Being in a period of stress, our focus on American ideals and culture will of course give this program an importance to many which it may not fully deserve.

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I have never heard Miss Truman in the concert hall, but I heard her first radio program and both of her recent television programs. Her voice has improved considerably since her first radio engagement. On television, she has a charm of presence and a winning smile. One could wish the latter were in her voice. Her singing in this program is consistently good, though it lacks changes in coloring to give it mood variety. Her diction is good and her assurance shows the extent of her preparation for this program. She has a charm and sweetness in her singing which will communicate much or little to different listeners, according to their likes or dislikes in singing artistry. It is so with most singers.

Miss Truman has been the unfortunate recipient of widely divergent types of critical comment from the much publicized writeup of a Washington critic, which parenthetically I did not find so caustic to warrant a Presidential blast (what are we coming to in this day and age?), to the fabulous critique by one — Dr. Putzi Szczerbowski, L.L., D.M.— in the February issue of *The New American Mercury*. The latter gentleman compares Miss Truman to Jenny Lind, who he could not possibly have heard, and to Gabriella Gatti and de los Angeles. Such a rave critique as Dr. Szczerbowski writes, extolling at the same time Miss Truman's artistry and the wonders of America (she is in his estimation "new America's greatest asset — greater than Niagara Falls"), is as unfair to her as has been some of the adverse critiques written by others. On the evidence of this record, I would say that Miss Truman, though she has but recently begun a singing career, is a growing artist with promise of even finer things ahead. I do not think this program does full justice to her voice, for the range of most of the songs are not grateful for a true soprano. She has had fine cooperation from Mr. Shaw and Victor: in the instrumental background which includes a harpsichord — somewhat submerged — a relic of the period, and in firstrate recording. —P.H.R.

BACH: *Cantata 208 — Sheep may safely graze; Cantata 147 — Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring; Komm, süsser Tod;* **PURCELL:** *Dido and Aeneas — When I am Laid in Earth* (all arr. Stokowski); **Leopold Stokowski and His Symphony Orchestra.**

RCA Victor 45 rpm discs Nos. 49-3159 and 49-3087, \$1.05 each.

▲**MR. STOKOWSKI** has outdone himself in these four transcriptions. Never in his palmiest days did he play upon the instruments of his orchestra with such astonishing virtuosity and with such obvious relish as in the two cantata numbers. *Komm, süsser Tod* and *Dido's famous lament*, on the other hand, are played for all the exalted pathos there is in them, with a breadth no singer could match. The recording is of just the kind to second the conductor-arranger in his passion for detail. —P.L.M.

BYRD: *Mass for four voices; The Fleet Street Choir* conducted by **T. B. Lawrence.** London 10" LP disc LPS-301, \$4.95.

▲**AS WE LISTEN** to this mass it is interesting to remember what William Byrd once wrote: "There is a certain hidden power, as I learnt by experience, in the thoughts underlying the words themselves; so that, as one meditates upon the sacred words and constantly and seriously considers them, the right notes, in some inexplicable manner, suggest themselves quite spontaneously." An unusually adaptable composer, Byrd wrote music for Catholic as well as Church of England services, and three masses have come down to us, one for three voices, one for four and one for five. Several years ago the Fleet Street Choir recorded the five-voice work (English Decca K 1058-60) and it is good to have another from the same source. As was to be expected, their performance has technical finish and good tone quality (in the open un-vibrated English tradition) as well as dedication. There are some peculiarities, such as the pronunciation of the Latin text according to academic rather than church usage, because of Mr. Lawrence's conviction that the effect is thus more forceful. The re-

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arranging of the sections of the mass so that the *Sanctus* and *Benedictus* follow the *Gloria* must be an accommodation to the 10" LP disc. This is unfortunate, and I feel that it defeats the very advantages of LP; for if we cannot have our music in the proper order there seems little point in having it uninterrupted.

The recorded tone of the choir is clearer on the second side of the disc than the first — indeed, at the outset, while by no means bad, it struck me as not quite good enough for the much praised *ffrr*. However, it is not enough to dull the pleasure in hearing this wonderful music.

—P.L.M.

CANTELOUBE: *Songs of the Auvergne*; Susan Reed (soprano), H. Bennett (flute), H. Shulman (oboe), D. Weber (clarinet), A. Twardowsky (cello) and George Reeves (piano). **FOLK SONGS:** *Sweet Betsy* from *Pike* (Western movement); *Turtle dove* (Southern mountains); *Next market day* (Irish); *The Riddle Song* (American); *The Zebra Dun* (Cowboy song); *Gently Johnny, my jingalo* (Old English); *My Lagan Love* (Irish); *Molly Malone* (Irish); *Fare thee well* (Southern mountains); **Susan Reed** (soprano), accompanying herself. Columbia LP disc ML 54368, \$5.45.

IT SEEMS to have occurred to someone that Miss Reed, with her sweet clear voice and her hallmark of sophisticated simplicity, might be the logical successor to Madeleine Grey, with whose name the Canteloube arrangements of Auvergne folksongs are likely always to be associated. So, with the orchestra reduced to accommodate five assisting instrumentalists, she presented a group of the songs in Town Hall about a year ago, and her success was sufficient to bring about this recording. It was obvious in Town Hall, and it is obvious now in one's own living room, that Miss Reed has carefully studied Miss Grey and modeled her performance on the best of possible examples. Even in the one song — *Pastourelle*, which did not find a place in Miss Grey's recording, the influence is plain enough. There is little fault to find except that Miss Reed lacks Miss Grey's "starch." The French lady too had a clear voice, and there wasn't too much color in it, but when she sang about the misfortune of the man who has a wife, or hummed over her spinning wheel, or called across the valley to her lover, there was a

spirit in her that Miss Reed hasn't quite caught. And it must be admitted that something of the open-air atmosphere which so completely justified the elaborateness of Canteloube's orchestrations has been lost in the reduction of the ensemble.

On the reverse Miss Reed is on familiar ground. Singing in her own language to her own accompaniment on the zither and other folk instruments (we are not told just what they are) she is always simple enough, just arch enough and just knowing enough to carry her various points. Incidentally, some of the little rapid passages she sings are done to a turn. And so is the recording! —P.L.M.

DEBUSSY: *Le Martyre de Saint-Sébastien*; The Oklahoma City Symphony Orchestra conducted by Victor Alessandro, with the Oklahoma City Symphony Chorale, Frances Yeend and Miriam Stewart (sopranos) and Anna Kaskas, (contralto). Allegro LP ALG 100, \$5.95.

▲SPEAKING of this 1917 score as Debussy's *Parsifal*, Emile Vuillermoz wrote: "(It) is a masterpiece which has not yet been understood. It remains to be discovered." Now, some 30 years later, it still hasn't been discovered but, thanks to Allegro, the means for doing so are at hand.

The incidental music for D'Annunzio's "mystery-play," *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian*, has needed a complete recording for a long time. Until now the only recordings were a suite of "orchestral fragments" under Coppola (Victor VM-767, discontinued) and the third act fanfare under Inghelbrecht (in Columbia M-344, discontinued). Even though this new recording is not complete, there are three cuts of about ten measures each, it is substantially so and makes one realize the pitiful inadequacies of a segmented hearing.

In this work — as in all late Debussy — continuity is of essential importance. All of this hour long score must be heard before its true dignity becomes perceptive — excerpts sound pallid. Each of the five sections of the work, which follow each other with a juxtaposition of colorful orchestration and simple choral writing, practically illuminate the text.

Fortunately the disc contains an excellent booklet of translations and program notes by John Burk for the first performance by the Boston Symphony, so that an appreciation of

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Debussy's score within its own context is quite possible.

The music itself will come as something of a surprise, even to Debussyans. As though to counteract the high-flown, though often impressive, lines of D'Annunzio, the lavish decor indications and the pseudo-Oriental element in the play itself, Debussy has written very economically, often contrapuntally yet always simply, and developed a technique which is the antithesis of "impressionism."

The performance is satisfactory though the orchestra tends to be a bit ragged here and there. The quality of all the voices is exceptional. Alessandro is no Coppola, but he gets fine results with the vocal group, all of whom behave as though they've known the score for a long time.

Technically the recording is about the best that Allegro has issued so far. There are still some blurred top notes and some surface noise, but this does not prevent the disc from being acceptable.

—D.S.R.

GOUNOD: *Faust* — *Le veau d'or*; **MOZART:** *Le Nozze di Figaro* — *Tutto è disposto*; *Aprile un po' quegli occhi*; **Italo Tajo** (basso) with **RCA Victor Orchestra** conducted by **Renato Cellini**. Victor 45 rpm disc 49-3153, 95c.

▲MR. TAJO must be one of the most Italiante Mephistopheleses ever to appear in Gounod's very French opera; his failure to sing the language convincingly takes something from the shape of the melody. Having chalked this side up as overdrawn, the listener is in for a surprise at the mildness of the companion-piece. Tajo has a good reputation as a Mozart singer, but here he misses the implications for once by underplaying. The recording is very good. —P.L.M.

HANDEL: *Ottone* — *Come to me, soothing sleep* (*Vieni, o figlio*); *Floridanle* — *O what pleasure* (*Vanne sequ'il mio desio*); *The trumpet is calling* (*Un'ombra di pace*). **SCHUBERT:** *Liebesbotschaft* (*Schwanengesang, no. 1*); *Gretchen am Spinnrade*, Op. 2. **Marian Anderson** (contralto) and **Franz Rupp** (piano). Victor 45 rpm discs Nos. 49-3157 and 49-3158, \$1.05 each.

▲THE THREE HANDEL ARIAS are taken from a collection arranged by Arthur Somervell; the texts are frankly adaptations making no attempt to convey the original meanings of

the words. The last of them is of indefinite source; the label gives the original title incorrectly and ungrammatically as *Un'ombra di pace*. As far as I can ascertain no such aria exists in the Handel-Gesellschaft edition.

Miss Anderson has some difficulties with pitch in this little recital, and she hardly brings off the sustained lines of the *Ottone* piece with the reserved assurance of Kathleen Ferrier in her recording (English Columbia DX 1194). Strangely, for one with so rich and noble a voice, Miss Anderson has always been happiest in lightly moving music, and so it is no longer surprising to hear the little *Floridanle* pieces tossed off with a real air. Of the Schubert songs *Liebesbotschaft* fares considerably the better; in fact it shows the singer at her present best. *Gretchen*, again, lacks surety, and matters are not helped by the usually admirable Mr. Rupp, who provides an erratic spinning wheel. The recording is excellent throughout.

—P.L.M.

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▲THAT **GENEVIEVE WARNER** is an unusual young singer the watchers of the stars have known for some time. Now she is to be congratulated on making her record debut with a beautiful, varied and nicely unified program. Those who cling to the teachings of the older textbooks in which *Das Veilchen* was set down not only as the beginning of the art song but as Mozart's one real contribution in the field, may be surprised to find so much of distinction on the first side of the disc. There can be no question that he was fully aware of the special subtleties of the *lied*, its intimacy and the particular problems of word setting that set it apart from the opera. It seems there may have been some subtlety in the making up of this program, for Miss Warner has brought together two *Luise* songs — *Lied der Trennung*, in which the lover parts from this young lady, and the short song with the long title in which *Luise* burns her faithless lover's letters.

The Schubert side is hardly less impressive. This setting of *Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt* (*Lied der Mignon*) has been effectively eclipsed by the actually less beautiful Tchaikovsky song, *An die Nachtigall*. *Im Frühling* and *Im Abendrot*, lovely songs all, turn up occasionally, but so far as I know *Gott im Frühling* and *Die Gebüsche* have not previously been done on records.

Miss Warner's voice has a freshness and lyrical beauty to me reminiscent of Alma Gluck; she is intelligent and naturally musical. But having praised her enterprise in selecting so rarified a program, I must admit that she has not yet enough contrasting colors or a crisp enough diction to carry it through with complete success. Nevertheless there are some fine performances here — the best to my mind being *Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt*. All is not quite well with the recorded piano tone. —P.L.M.



Genevieve Warner

MOUSSORGSKY (arr. **Rimsky-Korsakoff**); Highlights from *Boris Godounoff* — *Varlaam's Aria*, Act I; *Monologue*, Act II; *Farewell and Death of Boris*, Act IV; **Boris Christoff** (bass) with the **Philharmonia Orchestra** and **Chorus** conducted by **Issay Dobrowen**. RCA Victor 45 rpm set WDM-1436, 3 discs, \$3.65 (also 78 rpm set).

▲THE ENGLISH are willing to concede that Chaliapin's mantle has fallen on Boris Christoff, though we are told his voice is not as large when heard in the opera house. Christoff was to have come to the Metropolitan this past season, but Emigration Authorities ruled him out. Somebody at Victor has added to Mr. Schonberg's competent notes a short paragraph on the young basso, ending with the erroneous statement that he made his debut at the Metropolitan "on the opening night of the 1950-51 season in *Don Carlos*." It was Cesare Siepi who made his debut, in place of Christoff.

Comments on Christoff have appeared in the pages of this magazine from time to time in Mr. Peckham's *Recent Importations*. There is no question that he is one of the young artists of today to be reckoned with; he was only 29 when he made these records. One suspects he studied Chaliapin's recordings of these selections and patterned his own interpretations on them — which was sound business.

ness on the part of a young artist. But Christoff has a fine bass voice and the ability to color his tones — from a softly shaded *pianissimo* to a rich *forte*. That one so young penetrates the emotions of Boris is praiseworthy, even though traceable to his predecessor. What makes these selections equally as impressive as Chaliapin's, in my estimation, are the wonderful orchestral accompaniments by which, as one reviewer has said, the atmosphere of the scenes are immediately established. Christoff's interpretation of Boris is more subtle than Kipnis', and better sung than Pinza's. Victor's failure to make these selections available on LP is regrettable, especially in view of the fact that an LP disc of Chaliapin's recordings were recently issued.

—J.N.

ELENA NIKOLAIDI IN OPERATIC Ari-

AS: *Don Carlo* — *O don fatale* (Verdi), *Macbeth* — *Una macchia e qui tuttora* (Verdi), *Semiramide* — *Bel raggio lusinghier* (Rossini); Elena Nikolaidi (contralto) with the Columbia Symphony Orchestra conducted by Fausto Cleva. SONG RECITAL: *Der Sylfe des Friedens* (Mozart), *Schäferlied* (Haydn), *Der Erl-König* (Schubert), *Mondnacht* (Schumann), *Alte Liebe* (Brahms); Nikolaidi with Jan Behr (piano). Columbia 10" LP disc ML-2165, \$4.00.

▲NEW TO RECORDS is Elena Nikolaidi's work as a recitalist. Her operatic performances, listed above, are reissues and their outstanding merits will come as no surprise to regular readers of these pages.

The songs here presented are first class, though a few of them are overworked. The excellent musicianship and wonderful vocalizing of Elena Nikolaidi would be capable, however, of making staler pieces than these sound fresh again. If Nikolaidi's art had a little more delicacy to give contrast to its ever present grandness, it would be as satisfying in the concert hall as it is in the opera house. As it is, almost anyone will, I think, find it most uncommon and mostly a pleasure. Especially recommended is this fine contralto's discourse of Schumann's ecstatic and touching *Mondnacht*. —C.J.L.

OPERATIC RECITAL: *Louise* — *Depuis le jour* (Charpentier); *La Traviata* — *Ah! fors è lui* (complete scene) (Verdi); *Manon*



Suzanne Danco

— *Recitative and Adieu, notre petite table* (Massenet) *Carmen* — *Micaela's Aria* (Bizet); *Alceste* — *Divinites du Styx* (Gluck); *Dido and Aeneas* — *When I am laid in earth* (Purcell); Suzanne Danco (soprano) with L'Orchestra de la Suisse Romande conducted by Alberto Erede. London LP disc LLP 224, \$5.95.

▲OF THE POST-WAR WOMEN SINGERS new to recording, Suzanne Danco, Gabriella Gatti and Victoria de los Angeles, have shown the most discerning musicality and cultivated artistry. The voices of Danco and Gatti are unusually finished in this day and age; the production of both is almost faultless with a vocal line that derives from true *bel canto* teaching. All three of these women rate with the great singers of bygone days. Listening to Miss Danco, one can understand why she won the first prize for *Bel Canto* at the 1936 International Voice Contest at Vienna. She employs her voice as a telling medium of expression in the service of the composer. Moreover, she is a gifted linguist, at home in all the languages she essays in these selections.

Miss Danco recalls the artistry of Eide Norena, though her voice has more warmth in the middle range and a greater degree of intensity on top. I have always regarded Norena's version of Micaela's aria as the best on records, but now I am willing to concede Miss Danco first place. It is good to hear the recitative before this aria and to find that Miss Danco does not interpolate a high note at the end. The composer's ending is more in keeping with the timid Micaela. In Louise's famous aria, the singer's expressive treatment of the poetic text is most rewarding; there is quiet ecstasy in her opening and an accumulative ardor appropriate to the impassioned climax of the music. Only her final top note is not quite as well centered as it might have been, but it scores nevertheless.

In Violetta's famous scene, Danco shows her skill as coloratura soprano. There is appropriate tenderness and bravura in her singing, and a welcome observance of Verdi's *pianissimo* markings. Her Manon is full of tenderness and sentiment. What surprised me most was her singing of the Gluck aria and the Purcell *Lament*. Here, is a soprano that seems to the manner born for Gluck's music — not since Suzanne Balguerie made her version of *Divinités du Slyz* have I heard such a satisfying rendition of this aria. While it will be admitted that Purcell's *Lament* profits by a voice of darker hue, it must be admitted that Miss Danco sings it with genuine pathos and true tenderness. Miss Danco, who has recently sung at the La Scala in Milan, should be invited to sing at our own Metropolitan.

The orchestral accompaniments are appropriately full and rich, and London's engineers have done a highly competent job for both singer and orchestra. —P.H.R.

POULENC: *Banaliés* and *Chansons Villageoises*. **RAVEL:** *Histoires Naturelles* and *Trois Chants Hébraïques*. **Pierre Bernac** (baritone) and **Francis Poulenc** (piano). Columbia LP disc ML-4333, \$5.45.

▲A GENEROUS HELPING of some of Poulenc's best songs — which means the best there are today — and an up-to-date recording of Ravel's imaginative *Histoires naturelles* is the welcome news that this disc provides. No longer news but hardly less welcome is the pleasure of hearing once again those distin-

guished interpreters, Pierre Bernac and Francis Poulenc.

Bernac, who is well past whatever vocal prime he had, performs a triumph of mind over matter. Like many another recitalist of note, he never had a voice remarkable for size, range, or timbre. However, what he does possess is at present rarer than platinum: a command of enunciation, musicianship, and expressive communication that makes his work in the concert room as memorable as almost anyone's. That Bernac is the greatest interpreter of Poulenc's song is widely acknowledged. But if any listener can remember more lovely performances of *Histoires naturelles* and *Trois chants hébraïques*, I wish he would share his memory with all of us. And if anyone plays more handsome accompaniments than Poulenc, I want to hear about that too.

The most distressing thing about this release is the absence of texts or translations. It is impossible to catch all of the beauty here without a good working knowledge of the words, just as it is in any first-class song. Telling the reader (as the annotator does) that the Apollinaire and Fombeure texts for *Banaliés* and *Chansons villageoises* are untranslatable is not only inaccurate but it smacks of incompetence somewhere.

—C.J.L.

ROMBERG: *New Moon* (Abridged); **Eleanor Steber** and **Nelson Eddy**, with Chorus and Orchestra conducted by **Leon Arnaud**. Columbia 10" LP disc ML-2164. \$4.00.

▲THIS OPERETTA hasn't exactly been neglected by the recording companies. The present set makes the third LP version to appear within the last year, and there are plenty of singles in the catalogues of *Lover Come Back To Me*, *One Kiss*, etc. None of the LPs is a "complete" recording, though Victor's LK-1011 (12") with Al Goodman and a splendid cast covers most of the score. Capitol P-219 (10") with Gordon MacRae and Paul Weston and his orchestra is a streamlined version following the pattern of the Railroad Hour presentations on radio. Columbia's falls between the two, and is surely recommendable for Eleanor Steber's lovely singing, though Nelson Eddy is not in her class. Technically, Columbia has done a swell job. —E.A.

WAGNER: *Tristan und Isolde* — *Narrative and curse; Love-death; Tannhäuser — Elisabeth's Prayer; Lohengrin — Euch, Lüften, die mein Klagen*; Helen Traubel (soprano) with RCA Victor Orchestra conducted by Frieder Weissmann. RCA Victor LP disc LM 1122, \$5.72.

▲IT SEEKS a little odd, now that Miss Traubel and Victor have gotten together on more characteristic fare than that which signified her return to the label, that she should follow so closely after Kirsten Flagstad's latest release with the same scene from the first act of *Tristan*. Perhaps this was done as a direct challenge, or perhaps it is Victor's way of saying: "We now have the world's two greatest Wagnerian sopranos recording for us — take your pick of Isolde." The Flagstad set, made in England some two years or so ago, struck me as being the most successful Wagnerian recording I have heard from her. For the complete Wagnerite it has the advantage of presenting more of the music — it begins with the words *Doch nun von Tristan*, whereas Traubel's version starts at *Erfuhrest du meine Schmach* — and it benefits by the presence of a Brangäne (Elisabeth Höngen) although a rather light-voiced one. Beyond this it may suffice to say that the choice is between Flagstad at her postwar top form and Traubel also at her best if we discount a few uneasy high tones. Perhaps an even more interesting comparison may be made between this *Liebestod* and that made by the same soprano several years ago with orchestra conducted by Rodzinski (Columbia 12212D). Only the questionable advantage of LP, combining the finale with the first act selection,

can be advanced in favor of the new recording. Nor is Miss Traubel at present able to float her voice as one might wish in the music of Elisabeth and Elsa — parts never well suited to her type of delivery, as is Isolde.

—P.L.M.

In the Popular Vein

by Enzo Archetti

▲JAZZ HAD ITS GOLDEN AGE, too. That was in the 30's when "hot jazz" or "swing" (they were interchangeable and inseparable terms, in spite of the reams of paper

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expended by the learned to try to prove that they were two separate schools) was at its height. Fortunately, the era is well preserved on records. There are many discs (some of them now collectors' items) which give a good account of the music and musicians of that important period in the development of American jazz. But, by far, one of the most important recordings only came to light recently after having been lost for 12 years — the *Benny Goodman Carnegie Hall Concert* (Columbia LP set SL160).

On January 16, 1938 Benny Goodman assembled his band, his Trio, his Quartet, and an imposing array of guest artists representing the cream of the crop and, with some misgivings, gave his now historic concert in Carnegie Hall, New York. Since then there have been other history-making jazz concerts from the same stage — by Duke Ellington, Stan Kenton, and others — but Benny Goodman's 1938 venture remains unique for its daring, its quality, its spontaneity, and its virtuosity.

Happily, someone had the foresight to record the event. The entire concert was relayed from a single overhead mike to the CBS studios and two sets were made. One was destined for the Library of Congress. The other disappeared. Twelve years later, the second set turned up in a closet in Benny Goodman's home. Wisely, it was transferred to tape and Columbia has preserved it on two LP's. It is one of the authentic documents in American musical history, a verbatim report, in the accents of those who were present on "The Night of January 16, 1938."

23 Top Numbers

The program consists of 23 numbers, some by the full band; some by the Trio and Quartet; some by combinations including special guest artists Count Basie, Teddy Wilson, Lionel Hampton, Bobby Hackett, Johnny Hodges, Harry Carney, Cootie Williams, Freddy Green, Walter Page, Lester Young, Buck Clayton, and Martha Tilton. There is a jam session on *Honeysuckle Rose* with a group of players that has seldom been equaled. There is the sensational *Sing Sing Sing* played by the entire band. And *Body and Soul* played with amazing delicacy by the Trio (Goodman, Wilson, and Krupa). There is hardly a number which isn't a gem in its own right. And the whole concert has

been recorded with a fidelity which belies the almost casual way in which it was accomplished. Columbia deserves an Oscar, a D.S.C., or something for having made available this memorable history-making concert.

After the incandescent Goodman performance, the *Bobby Hackett Jam Session* (Columbia CL-6156) sounds very tame and unimportant. This, in spite of some nice moments by Hackett, Charles Queener, and Carl Kress. Hackett took part in the Goodman Carnegie Hall concert but he has come a long way since — not all of it up-hill. There are flashes of the Bix Beiderbecke quality which first shot Bobby to fame in *Tin Roof Blues*, for instance, but there aren't enough of these to sustain a 20-minute session. Some excellent rhythmic support is given by Cliff Lee-man, drums; Bob Casey, bass; and Danny Perri, alternate on guitar. The recording is first rate. Some of the important numbers included are *Struttin' with Some Barbecue*, *Fidgety Feel*, and *Royal Garden Blues*.

Another near-miss is *Oh Babe and Walkin' with the Blues* (Columbia 39045) by Benny Goodman and his Sextet; here consisting of Teddy Wilson, Terry Snyder, Terry Gibbs, Johnny Smith, and Bob Carter, plus Benny himself. A total flop is *I See A Million People* (Columbia 39034) with the whole Goodman aggregation, as of now. The reverse is the same number played by Cab Calloway and his orchestra and it's no better.

More "Piano Moods"

Columbia adds to its *Piano Moods* series. Stan Freeman (CL-6158) and Eddie Heywood (CL-6157) are the latest. Both treat their music rhapsodically. Freeman begins characteristically with an improvisational introduction leading into a rhythm supported (Bobby Haggert, bass, and Al Casamenti, guitar) chorus. Heywood's treatment of the melody is more straight-forward, backed throughout by Frank Carroll on bass and Terry Snyder on drums. Both men are worthy additions to Columbia's special Hall of Fame. The piano tone again has been realistically recorded.

When Capitol first set up shop, it immediately made itself solid with jazz enthusiasts generally by leaning heavily in the direction of genuine jazz, in its monthly issues, instead of recording only popular trivia. One of the best of its issues was a four volume

History of Jazz which covered the field from the beginning to Progressive Jazz in a praiseworthy manner, utilizing some of the best available musicians. The volumes were called: *The Solid South*, *The Golden Era*, *Then Came Swing*, and *This Modern Age*.

More than 75 well-known artists were used — including Barney Bigard, Leadbelly, Eddie Miller, Dave Barbour, Sonny Greer, Otto Hardwick, Red Nichols, Joe Sullivan, Jack Teagarden, Lawrence Brown, Harry Carney, Coleman Hawkins, Horace Henderson, John Kirby, Rex Stewart, Benny Goodman, Teddy Wilson, Billy Butterfield, Benny Carter, and Stan Kenton. Several popular organizations were also used — these including Zutty Singleton's Trio and Creole Band, Lamare's Louisiana and Levee Loungers, Sonny Greer and The Duke's Men, Red Nichols and His Pennies, Paul Whiteman and His Orchestra, Jack Teagarden's Chicagoans, Rex Stewart's Big Eight, Benny Goodman and his Orchestra, Stan Kenton's Orchestra, Coleman Hawkins' Band, and The King Cole Trio.

Improved Recording

The four volumes have been transferred to LP (H-23) to and including H-242) with their excellent notes by Dave Dexter, Jr. The recording seem to have improved in the transfer. But even with much less successful recording, this history exploring every phase and trend of jazz from early blues and rags to controversial modern progressive jazz and be-bop remains an important and exciting contribution to recorded music.

Perhaps the major key to Stan Kenton's amazing success, is his capacity to select outstanding talent and inspire it to greater achievement. He has never failed to give complete recognition to composers, arrangers, performers, and others who play a part in the conception and presentation of his exciting music. It is in appreciation of some of the most outstanding of these artists that Stan Kenton presents, in *Stan Kenton Presents...* (Capitol L-248), Maynard Ferguson, trumpet player; Shelley Manne, drummer; June Christy, vocalist; Art Pepper, alto-sax virtuoso; his brass section, consisting of five trumpets, four tenor trombones, one bass trombone, four horns in F, and tuba; and his string section, in specially created numbers.

Whatever you think of this nervous music, you cannot deny the virtuosity of the musicians concerned. Technically, the recording

represents a new kind of high for Capitol.

In the same vein is Capitol 1306 on which *Stan Kenton Presents... Vito Musso*, his closest associate in his new music. Musso expends his talents on tenor sax on two extravagant arrangements: *Santa Lucia* and *Pagliacci* (actually part of the "Ridi, Pagliaccio" aria).

Cowboy Rhumba (Columbia 38950) is not a mere novelty. Woody Herman sings to Duke Ellington's accompaniment in this unusual fusion of two alien musical elements and the result is good. Backing it is a highly polished Ellington arrangement of *How High the Moon* played by the orchestra without vocals. Don't pass this up without a hearing.

Frank DeVol has taken 14 Jimmy McHugh compositions, ranging from some of his earliest when he wrote songs for the famous Cotton Club which introduced Duke Ellington to Broadway, to his latest for Hollywood films and Broadway musicals, and wove them into *A Symphonic Portrait of Jimmy McHugh* (Capitol ECD-249, 4-12" discs).

A tribute to a man who has been a great influence in popular music and who has created some cherishing tunes (*On the Sunny Side of the Street*, *I Can't Give You Anything But Love*, *I'm In the Mood for Love*, *Diga-Diga-Do*), Frank DeVol has turned out a tasteful and well-orchestrated suite, exciting and not at all flamboyant or Hollywoodish. Beautifully recorded.

Mary Martin at her Best

Cole Porter's *Anything Goes* and Arthur Schwartz's *The Bandwagon* are two perennial musicals that will remain memorable for the high order of their many good tunes: *You're the Top*; *Anything Goes*; *I Get A Kick Out of You*; *Blow, Gabriel, Blow*; *Dancing in the Dark*; and *I Love Louisa*.

The delightful Mary Martin, with a chorus and an orchestra conducted by Lehman Engel, review the best in both shows in two LP's by Columbia (ML-2159 and ML-2160). The orchestrations are by Ted Royal. Both selections include the overtures. Mary Martin is tops and so are the recordings.

If you aren't already tired of the bitter-sweet sentiment of *Tennessee Waltz*, you'll find a good version of it on Columbia 39126 sung by Jo Stafford with a Quartet and Paul Weston and his orchestra. There is also a perverted version by Spike Jones and His City Slickers on Victor 47-4011 which can be

fun for a while. Sammy Kaye's on Columbia 39113 is a bit too plain for sustained interest.

Good for dancing: *Mambo Negro* by Xavier Cugat and His Orchestra (Columbia 39059); *Shadow Waltz* by Buddy Morrow and His Orchestra (Victor 47-3994); *I'll Get By* (Larry Green and His Orchestra, Victor 47-3990); *Castles in the Sand* (Jau Garber and His Orchestra, Capitol 1351); *Carousel Polka* (Ernie Benedict and His Polkateers, Victor 51-1183); *Moonlight on the Ganges* (Ray Noble and His Orchestra, Columbia 39084); *The Cow Bell Song—Polka* (Bernie Wyté and His Polka Band, Victor 51-1182); *Mambo del Papelero and Cuban Mambo* (Perez Prado and His Orchestra, Victor 47-3988); *Barnyard Polka* (Six Fat Dutchmen, Victor 51-1181); *The Midnight Waltz* (Wayne King and His Orchestra, Victor 47-3998).

Both *Pig Pig* and *The Little White Duck* are labeled novelty songs but actually they are children's songs, *Pig Pig* being in the nature of a round like *Old McDonald Had A Farm*. Burl Ives does both excellently on Columbia 38961 and 39066, for both are in his special province as a folk singer. He is not as successful with the flipovers though the arrangement as a fox trot of *Last Night the Nightingale Woke Me* (on 38961) is more to blame than he.

Friml's "Firefly"

It was only natural that the popularity of Allan Jones' record of *The Donkey Serenade* should have brought about a recording of the whole of Friml's *Firefly*. On four 45's (Victor WDM-1467) Allan Jones, Elaine Malbin, Martha Wright, Hayes Gordon, and the Guild Choristers present all the important numbers, very well sung indeed. The good guiding hand of Al Goodman, who with his orchestra, supplies the support, is clearly evident throughout. The recording is tops.

The Donkey Serenade which was written by Friml as an extra number for the film version of the operetta, is sung by Allan Jones on the last side for good measure.

As a companion piece to Victor WDM-1395 in which Mario Lanza sings the operatic arias used in his pictures *The Toast of New Orleans*, Victor has now issued *Mario Lanza Sings Popular Songs from "The Toast of New Orleans"* (WDM-1417). Assisted by the Jeff Alexander Choir and an orchestra directed by Ray

Sinatra, Mario wastes his talents on four mediocre songs. When will some good teacher take in hand this naturally gifted singer and turn his ability into more artistically rewarding channels?

Tallulah Bankhead makes her recording debut as a vocalist on Columbia 39109 "singing" *I'll Be Seeing You* and *You Go To My Head*. Miss Bankhead should stick to her comedy on the radio. By far the best part of this recording is the accompaniment in which Joe Bushkin plays some tasteful piano.

A New "Zany"

The newest wacky record to hit the market is *John and Marsha* (Capitol 1356). To the sobbing tremolo of a pipe organ background, in the best soap opera manner, the two characters, John and Marsha keep repeating each others' name with different inflections, overtones, undertones, and insinuations, finally breaking into laughter. That's all. No other words are uttered.

The perpetrator of this zany piece is Stan Freberg, a Pasadena Swedish minister who, since his release from the Army has built a reputation for making animal sounds on radio, in film cartoons, on children's records, and on TV puppet shows. He is also a night club entertainer and *John and Marsha* is an important item in his repertory. You should hear this record. The reverse, *Ragtime Dan*, is not in the same class.

Much has happened to the Ory band that last recorded for Columbia (Album C-126: *New Orleans Jazz*). Three of the members of that group have died. Barney Bigard joined Louis Armstrong's All Stars; and "Moundtudi" Garland could not participate in this latest recording, *Kid Ory* (Columbia CL-6145). In spite of all this, the record is a good sequel. It has much the same verve and imagination of the first collection. *Savoy Blues*, *Creole Song*, and *Mahogany Hall Stomp* are particularly good. The rest of the program is *Blues For Jimmy*, *At A Georgia Camp Meeting*, *Go Back Where You Stayed Last Night*, and *Yaaka Hula Hicky Dula*.

The new lineup is: Edward "Kid" Ory, trombone; Edward "Teddy" Buckner, cornet; Joseph Darnesbourg, clarinet; Lloyd Glenn, piano; Julian Davidson and Eddie Scrivanek, guitars; Morty Corb, bass; Minor "Ram" Hall, drums.

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